

Easy Cooking

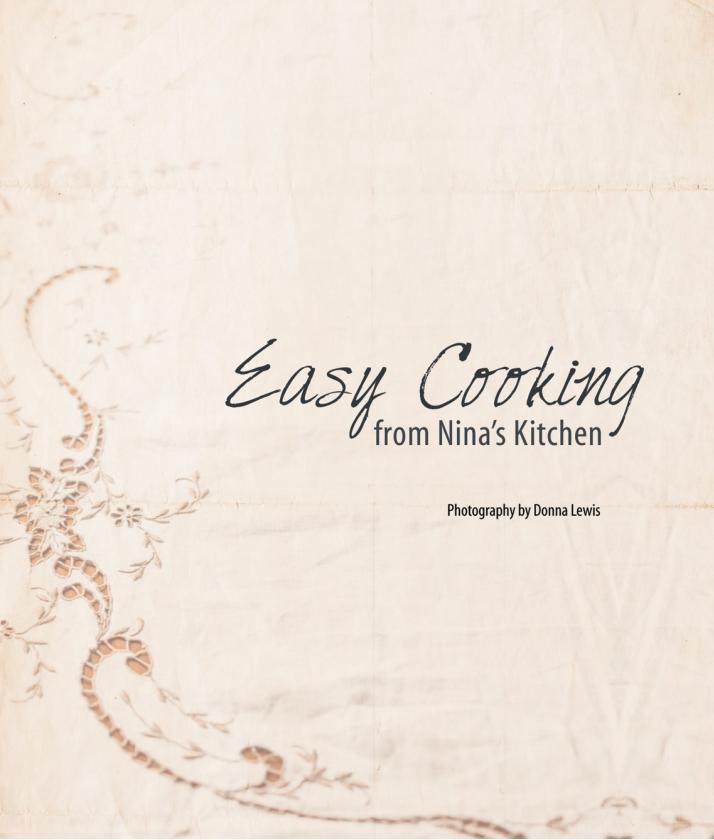
from Nina's Kitchen



Nina Timm



*For Grandma Mina and Mom Tina
My food inspirations*



Easy Cooking

from Nina's Kitchen

Photography by Donna Lewis

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Acknowledgements

I thought it would be easy to write the acknowledgements for this book. By my reckoning, I was the one who sat and wrote late at night and early in the morning, not to mention the hours and hours I spent at the stove and the mountains of dishes I washed. Perhaps this is how I once felt, but as I read through each recipe I now realise how many people were involved in this book. My heart is filled with gratitude to everyone who made a contribution – this certainly was not a solo project.

First on the list is ***my husband!*** Without you, this book would never have happened. For better or for worse, you awakened the foodie element in me and allowed me to believe that the world of food was my oyster. No marketing company could ever have marketed my blog, *My Easy Cooking*, as enthusiastically as you have, and all for no payment! Your favourite saying has always been: ‘Don’t mess around with my food!’ I know what you mean ... always keep dishes simple and recognisable! Although it’s not always pleasant to hear, it keeps me humble and unpretentious in the kitchen. Thank you for this, and thank you for keeping alive this dream of mine – of ours! I love you!

My children, who had to struggle through many flops on their plates, who always had to wait so that I could take that perfect photograph, and who often had to go to bed alone because I was out somewhere, cooking. Thank you for the big smiles and warm hugs when one of your favourites was on the menu. A warm hug can make you forget all about the many flops. You are my inspiration, and I hope and believe that you will treasure and keep close to your hearts the food traditions and the love of being together that I have tried to capture in my book, and pass them on to your own children and their children.

To ***my family*** all over the world, your encouragement has been incredible. Your congratulations and messages of support when you heard me on the radio or saw me on TV have been very special. To my sister, who lives just around the corner and has been my safety net, always willing to fetch children, buy

ingredients and be my guinea pig, thank you so much. Without all of you it would have been a very lonely journey indeed.

Mom and Dad, I can hardly include you in a larger group. You deserve special thanks, because you have a special place in my heart. Thank you for your help, support and unconditional love. Thank you for always reminding me where I come from, and thank you for teaching me to care and to live my life in service of others.

The list of **friends** I want to thank is as great as the good Lord's mercy. Each of you has played a huge role in my food journey up to now. Thank you for opening your homes and hearts to me when I needed to vent, have a cup of tea or just catch my breath. Your caring natures and advice are precious to me and played an enormous part in the making of *Easy Cooking from Nina's Kitchen*.

The extremely talented team at *Struik Lifestyle* deserves my greatest praise and appreciation. You took my Cinderella idea and turned it into an unbelievably beautiful book! Thank you for making me a part of this almost magical process. A first publication is like a first-born child – the experience is intense and filled with uncertainty. Thank you for being with me during the 'birthing' process.

Marius, Annelise, Simon and Nika Luckhoff, thank you for inviting us into your beautiful house for the photoshoot. Thank you for being part of the book and for making every photograph all the more special.

Last, but certainly not least, my thanks to you, the reader, for taking the time to read my book – to become a small part of me. I believe that you will be inspired by *Easy Cooking from Nina's Kitchen*. Perhaps a story or a recipe will remind you of your own childhood or of a memorable experience. I hope my book will be a good reading and living experience for YOU!

Thank you so much!

Foreword



Nina, I have always been a fan of your wonderful work. You have talent and passion and, like me, have a fetish for all things fresh. I have watched your growth and wondered when you would put what Nina does so well between the covers of your own cookbook. I'm a firm believer in the saying 'when your time is right', and Nina, your time is NOW! You were destined to become a household name in South Africa, you are a real peoples person, and you love to give them what they want. I drank a toast to you in 2012 when My Easy Cooking was voted Best Local Foodblog in South Africa by *Eat In* magazine. I love your new book, it says everything about you and who you are: a mother, a wife and a wonderful cook. I wish you every

success and hope you go from strength to strength.

Jenny Morris

Introduction



If someone had told me five years ago that I would write a book, I would have laughed out loud. I think if any teachers from my school days had to find out that Nina has become a writer, there would be many raised eyebrows. It still seems unreal to me – similar to the way I felt when I was expecting

my first child. As happens with a first pregnancy, you don't know what to expect, but when the swollen feet and discomfort start, you know that this is a reality you can't escape. My writing experience was exactly like that!

And here it is now – the 'baby' I've been cherishing in my heart for over a year is now in your hands. I hope and believe that you will read, enjoy and use it, and that you will find the short cut to your family's hearts and tummies.

The foodie bug bit me during my childhood, and it has grown immensely over the years. I wake up with a recipe in my head and go to bed at night with a different one. I grew up in a family where literally everything was celebrated with food, whether it was the death of a family member, the birth of a new one or just the precious get-togethers we had with friends and family. I remember that all our holidays were planned around everybody's favourite dishes from Grandma's and Mom's kitchens. Sometimes, when there were so many dishes that still had to be cooked but only a day or two of our holiday left, Mom would go on a mission and make two huge meals in one day – great memories!

As a child I didn't think of the price of food, and that it costs money to entertain. This was probably because my parents only gave of their best – that which was good, wholesome and affordable. What they had, they shared, even if it was just sandwiches that everyone could enjoy together. But if you got lucky and arrived at our house on a day when there was a leg of lamb, we shared that too. Everyone just ate a little less, but the togetherness made up for it a hundred times over.

I don't think my food stories are unique – there are many people who grew up in the same environment – but I'm happy to share them because on my travels through our beautiful country I've often met women who feel inferior and intimidated by modern food fads and new trends. Believe me, nothing, and I mean NOTHING, on Earth can be greater, better and more acceptable than food made with love. If you can open your heart so that people can see your love for them and for the gift of food, they will return to your table again and again ... guaranteed. After all, the short cut to people's hearts is made of love!

Things I can't do without in my kitchen



Sharp knives

Everybody (the people I know in food circles, anyway) dreams of owning a good set of chef's knives. These are very expensive and it is not always possible to have them at the top of your list of priorities, especially if you have children who need school fees, camping fees and pocket money. However, you should make sure you always have sharp knives – ask someone to sharpen them for you. For me there is no greater frustration than struggling with a blunt knife. If you're trying to gut or fillet a fish with a blunt knife, you'll end up with fishcakes.

Big pots and pans

A friend of ours is always joking and saying: pots come in 'small', 'medium', 'large' and 'Timm-sized'. With a nice big pot and pan, there's always room for another hungry soul at the table. I like pans with metal handles as they can go straight from the stovetop to the oven when I'm making something like steak, fish or frittatas. You can find these pans in the catering

department of large chain stores. I prefer working with heavy-based pots and pans as they regulate heat much better than the thin, light pots and pans.

A griddle

To me, a griddle is almost a necessity, so make sure it's on your birthday or Christmas list. Steak, chicken, fish and even vegetables are just so much tastier if they have lovely caramelised 'lines'.

A gas stove

I know half of you are ready to throw in the towel when you read this, because a gas stove is very expensive. I do most of my food demonstrations on small, one-plate gas stoves. They are cheap and, depending on the style of cooking, sometimes gas is just better; here I'm thinking especially of the Thai method of cooking. You can buy these stoves at any shop that sells gas fittings.

Glass mixing bowls

I prefer glass bowls because they are sturdy if you're beating eggs or making cake batter or bread dough. If you are going to marinade meat, it's also preferable to do so in glass or stainless steel rather than other metals such as aluminium. Perhaps it's also the nostalgia of Grandma's glass bowl with dough in it, covered with a clean cloth that makes me cling to this way of doing things.

A whisk

If you don't have a food processor ready and plugged in on your counter, a whisk is your best friend. By the time most people have taken their hand beaters and mixers out of the cupboard and plugged them in, my egg whites are already whisked. It's cheap and indispensable to me!

Metal tongs

This is probably the cheapest but most used piece of equipment in my kitchen. All the juices in chicken and steak are lost if you

poke holes in them with a fork to turn them over. These tongs are ideal for the job.

An adventurous spirit

Open your heart to change, read other people's recipes and take note of the comments made by your family or guests. Then try out some new ideas, tastes, spices and methods. Great flops in the kitchen have become iconic recipes – just think of the classic Tarte Tatin!

Constantly taste your food. I know this goes against the advice of every diet guru, but if you don't know what your food tastes like, how can you expect your guests to enjoy it?

Relax – white sauce and cheese can cover up a multitude of your food disgraces! Be innovative, give the dish a new name and *voilà* – you have a new recipe.

Happy cooking!

Cock-a-doodle-doo



Oh what wonderful breakfast memories I have! I fondly recall, as if it were yesterday, the Sunday mornings when my dad used to get up early to bake cheese scones for us. Other times he'd knock on the bedroom door bearing breakfast – usually a jam sandwich, a piece of sausage left over from the *braai*, and a steaming cup of strong, black coffee! To this day I drink my coffee strong and black, but fortunately I've given up the other less healthy habits over the years.

Our family always spent winter holidays on the farm visiting our Free State relatives. As a child I thought the lavish,

abundant Free State farm breakfasts were gifts from another planet. Breakfast always included bacon, sausage and sometimes even lamb chops, but strangely enough the thing that fascinated me the most was the mealie-meal porridge, with all its accompaniments, bubbling away every morning on the old Aga stove. Smooth porridge (*slap pap*), thick porridge (*stywepap*), crumbly porridge (*krummelpap*) – every kind of porridge was meticulously served with its own special accompaniment ... delicious farm butter with the smooth porridge, stewed fruit with the thick porridge, and the crumbly porridge was never served without a savoury stewed tomato sauce.

For a family to start the day together with a wholesome breakfast is truly something to be cherished!



Eggs

Perfectly poached

To make the perfect poached egg is easier than you think, and for me there is no better way to eat eggs, perhaps even with a few drops of truffle oil! A very dear friend taught me how to make the perfect poached egg:

Step 1: Place a large pot of water on the stove and bring to the boil.

Step 2: Place the eggs, shell and all, in the boiling water for 20 seconds.

Step 3: Using a slotted spoon, remove the eggs from the water and break each egg into its own cup. Slide the egg out of the cup and into the pot of boiling water.

Step 4: Poach until soft and still a bit runny. Serve on toasted and buttered ciabatta, with a pinch of salt and a little ground black pepper.

Omelette with smoked salmon or trout



2 eggs

15 ml water

salt and coarsely ground black pepper

25 ml butter

100 g smoked salmon or trout

80 g cream cheese

a handful of fresh watercress

Break one of the eggs into a mixing bowl. Separate the remaining egg, add the yolk to the first egg and place the egg

white into a separate mixing bowl. Add the water to the egg yolks and beat until light and fluffy. Beat the egg white until stiff and fold into the beaten yolks. Season with salt and pepper. Melt the butter in a frying pan until it starts to bubble, then add the egg mixture and reduce the heat to ensure that the omelette doesn't burn. Using an egg lifter, lift the edges of the omelette while turning the pan, so that the raw egg can run in underneath. When the egg is just cooked, slide the omelette out of the pan and onto a serving plate. Arrange the salmon or trout and cream cheese topped with watercress on one half of the omelette. Fold the other half over the filling and serve as a delicious brunch.

Makes 1 omelette

Goose egg frittata with exotic mushrooms

Once in a while you just have to be a bit extravagant and buy exotic mushrooms! Nowadays you can get a marvellous variety of mushrooms at your local market, and there's nothing better than coming home with a basket full of mushrooms and making your own farm frittata. The secret of a good frittata is to remove it from the oven while the egg is still a bit wobbly in the middle. Don't worry; the heat of the pan will finish cooking the egg. Of course, the most satisfying thing is to make the frittata with enormous goose eggs – velvety soft!



250 g mushrooms – I use a mix of portobello, shiitake, shimeji, enoki and button mushrooms

100 g butter
2 sprigs fresh thyme, chopped
5 ml smoked paprika
3 goose eggs
2 ml salt
2 ml white pepper
125 ml cream
125 ml coarsely grated Parmesan cheese

Preheat the oven to 180 °C. Clean the mushrooms by wiping them with a paper towel, and cut some of the bigger ones, like the shiitake and portobello mushrooms, into smaller pieces. Melt the butter in a large ovenproof pan and add the thyme and smoked paprika. Add the mushrooms and fry over high heat until they are beautifully golden-brown. Make sure the mushrooms don't become watery by ensuring that your pan is very hot else the mushrooms will steam instead of frying.

Break the eggs into a mixing bowl and beat with a fork. Add the salt, white pepper and cream and mix well. Pour the egg and cream mixture into the pan and stir lightly, making sure that the mushrooms are evenly distributed. Place the pan in the oven and bake the frittata for about 10 minutes or until cooked but still a bit wobbly in the middle. Sprinkle over the cheese and serve with toasted ciabatta and lots of butter.

Enough for 4–6 people



When preparing for this recipe I found out that goose eggs are more readily available during spring time. We used duck eggs, which are as delicious!

Boiled eggs with asparagus, pancetta and Parmesan bread fingers

There are so many myths about how to cook the perfect boiled egg, and yet so many people have a hard time getting it right!



2 eggs per person

5 ml salt

For the asparagus and pancetta

4 fresh asparagus per person

olive oil

4 slices pancetta (parma ham) per person

For the Parmesan bread fingers

1 slice day-old white bread per person

olive oil for brushing

80 g Parmesan cheese, finely grated

For the boiled eggs

Fill the pot with enough water (see points to remember below) and add the salt. Bring the water to the boil. While the water is heating, use a sharp needle and make a small hole in the shell on the wider end of each egg. When the water is boiling, use a slotted spoon and slowly lower one egg at a time into the water. Don't allow the water to boil too vigorously – this can cause the eggs to crack. See Cooking times below. Serve the eggs in eggcups with asparagus and pancetta, delicious buttered bread fingers or Parmesan bread fingers.

For the asparagus and pancetta

Break off the bottom fibrous end of the asparagus and rub each spear with olive oil. Wrap a slice of pancetta around the middle of each asparagus. Place on a baking tray and grill in the oven until the pancetta is nice and crispy.

For the Parmesan bread fingers

Preheat the oven to 180 °C. Slice the bread into 2 cm-wide fingers and brush with olive oil. Roll each bread finger in the Parmesan cheese and bake in the oven until crispy and golden-brown.

Important points to remember

- Use eggs that are about 5 days old; fresh eggs are difficult to shell.
- Eggs should always be at room temperature. If you keep your eggs in the fridge, run hot tap water over them for 1 minute.
- I always use extra-large or jumbo eggs.

- Use a pot just big enough for all the eggs to fit comfortably and have about 2 cm of water above them.

Cooking times for extra-large or jumbo eggs

- For a soft, runny egg, boil for 5 minutes.
- For a medium-boiled egg with a slightly runny yolk, boil for 6 minutes.
- When the cooking time is complete, place the eggs in cold water to stop further cooking.

Mealie-meal porridge

If you can find someone to bring you organic mealie-meal from the Free State, it would be a bonus. Believe me, it makes a huge difference.



Crumbly porridge (krummelpap)

450 ml water

5 ml salt

500 ml organic mealie-meal

15–20 ml farm butter to serve

coarsely ground black pepper (optional)

Place the water and salt in a heavy-based pot and bring to the boil. Add the mealie-meal to the water and stir with a long fork until it forms coarse crumbs. Cover and cook over the lowest heat for 45–50 minutes, loosening the crumbs with the fork every 10 minutes. Take care not to burn the porridge. Serve with farm butter and black pepper.

Enough for 6 people

A heavy-based pot is essential. The longer the porridge cooks, the tastier it becomes.

Thick porridge (stywepap)

500 ml water

5 ml salt

250 ml organic mealie-meal

15 ml butter to serve

Place the water and salt in a heavy-based pot and bring to the boil. In a separate bowl, mix the mealie-meal with a little water to make a moderately runny mixture, then add this to the pot. Mix well. Cover and cook over the lowest heat, simmering for about 50 minutes; stirring twice during this time. The porridge should form a lovely surprise crust over the base of the pot, which is heavenly with butter.

Enough for 6 people

Smooth porridge (slap pap)

1 litre water

5 ml salt

250 ml organic mealie-meal

milk and sugar to serve

30 ml butter and extra to serve

Pour 750 ml of the water into a heavy-based pot, add the salt and bring to the boil. Mix the remaining water with the mealie-meal until smooth, then add this to the pot. Cover and cook over the lowest heat, simmering for 50 minutes; stirring twice during this time. Remove from the heat and stir through the butter. Serve with milk, sugar and top each serving with a dollop of butter.

Enough for 6 people

Crispy polenta stack with butter-fried mushrooms

Pap tart was highly fashionable some years ago, and at every braai the ladies turned up with their rendition of this authentic South African concoction. I can't say that I ever enjoyed it, and, oh dear, the heartburn was something awful, but I still think the concept works. So I'll try and seduce you with an up-to-date version made with its Italian counterpart – polenta!

For the polenta

1 litre water
5 ml salt
375 ml polenta
45 ml butter
500 ml fresh breadcrumbs
250 ml finely grated Parmesan cheese
coarsely ground black pepper
2 eggs, beaten
oil for frying

For the mushrooms

500 g mixed mushrooms – such as porcini, enoki, shiitake, button mushrooms, etc.
100 g butter
15 ml olive oil
salt and coarsely ground black pepper
juice of 1 lemon
a few shavings of Parmesan cheese
2 sprigs fresh thyme, chopped

For the polenta

You can cook the polenta the day before and allow it to cool overnight. Bring the water to the boil in a large, heavy-based

pot and add the salt. While whisking, add the polenta a little at a time. After about 4 minutes it will start to thicken; add the butter and stir through. Reduce the heat, cover and simmer for about 10 minutes. Turn the polenta out onto a large baking tray, spread it evenly with the back of a spoon and allow to cool. Using a round cookie cutter, press out 12 polenta rounds and place the cut-offs in a separate bowl. The cut-offs can be fried to a crisp – they make an excellent snack for the children. Mix the breadcrumbs and Parmesan cheese, and season with a few grinds of pepper. Dip the polenta rounds in the egg and then coat in the breadcrumb mixture. Make sure the entire round is thickly covered in crumbs. Arrange the polenta rounds on the previously used baking tray and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes to set. Heat oil in a pan and fry the polenta rounds until golden-brown and crispy.

For the mushrooms

Wipe the mushrooms and quarter some of the bigger ones. Heat the butter and olive oil in a pan over high heat and fry the mushrooms until brown. Season with salt, pepper and lemon juice. Make sure the mushrooms don't become watery.

Serve the mushrooms between the polenta rounds and top with a few shavings of Parmesan cheese and a sprinkling of fresh thyme.

Enough for 6 people

Mealie-meal fritters

These fritters are delicious with a braai, but for breakfast I serve them with green figs and a strong cheese such as Cheddar – or even Blue cheese!



oil for deep-frying

250 ml mealie-meal (polenta works too)

250 ml cake flour

5 ml baking powder

2.5 ml salt

1 onion, peeled and finely grated

1 egg

enough milk to make a soft dough

Heat oil in a heavy-based pot until hot. Meanwhile, mix all the ingredients together to make a soft dough. Place spoonfuls of the dough into the hot oil and fry until golden-brown. Drain on paper towel and serve with green figs and a delicious cheese.

Makes 12–15 fritters

Health bread



750 g Nutty Wheat flour

5 ml salt

190 ml muesli of your choice – the more fruit and nuts, the better your bread will taste

125 ml raisins or sultanas

45 ml brown sugar

7.5 ml bicarbonate of soda

500 ml buttermilk

a few nuts and seeds for garnishing

Preheat the oven to 180 °C and spray a standard bread pan with non-stick cooking spray. Combine all the dry ingredients up to and including the brown sugar in a mixing bowl. Mix the bicarbonate of soda and buttermilk together, then stir into the dry ingredients until combined. Place the dough in the prepared pan and sprinkle a few nuts or some extra muesli over the top. Bake for 45–50 minutes or until a metal skewer inserted into the middle comes out clean. Serve with home-made cream cheese and green figs (see recipe below).

Makes 1 loaf

Home-made cream cheese with nuts and green figs



1 litre Greek yoghurt

125 g walnuts, chopped

5 preserved green figs, chopped

Pour the yoghurt into a clean muslin cloth and tie it at the top. Press out all the liquid and suspend the bag from a wire hanger in the fridge, with a dish underneath to catch the liquid that runs out. Refrigerate for about two days. Remove from the fridge, untie the cloth and *voilà* – your first cheese! Combine the nuts and figs with the cheese and spoon it into pretty jars. You can give these away as gifts, but be sure to keep one for yourself.

Makes 400–500 g

Breakfast roll with fruit and nuts

If you want to invite a few friends round for breakfast, there's no need to wreck the budget. A loaf of delicious fresh bread, a piece of cheese and a bit of jam can be a meal fit for a king. Add a good cup of coffee and your guests will definitely remember their visit!



For the bread

750 g cake flour

1 × 10 ml packet yeast

5 ml salt

500 ml lukewarm milk

For the topping

100 ml chopped nuts – use almonds, walnuts or pecan nuts

100 ml golden sultanas, raisins or currants

50 ml melted butter

50 ml honey or golden syrup

For the bread

Grease a round cake pan or spray with non-stick cooking spray. Place the flour, yeast and salt in a food processor and, while mixing, gradually add the milk until it comes together in a smooth dough. Knead on a lightly floured surface, or in the food processor using a k-blade, to a stiffish dough. Return the dough to the bowl, cover with cling wrap and place in a warm spot to rise until doubled in size. On a lightly floured surface, turn out the dough, knock it down and roll it into a long sausage about 4 cm thick. Roll this up into a spiral and place in the cake pan. Allow to rise again until it has doubled in size. Preheat the oven to 180 °C.

For the topping

Sprinkle the nuts and sultanas on top and press lightly into the dough. Bake for 35–40 minutes. When the bread is done (a skewer inserted into the middle will come out clean), mix the butter and honey together and pour over the bread. Serve warm with real farm butter and a good cup of coffee.

Makes 1 medium-sized loaf



Muesli with home-made yoghurt

Few things are as satisfying as eating your own home-made products. You know exactly what wholesomeness and flavour you've put into them. Home-made gifts are becoming ever more popular, and a jar of this delicious muesli makes a wonderful gift.

For the muesli

1 litre oats

250 ml raw almonds

250 ml dry coconut shavings (available at health shops)

200 ml pumpkin seeds

200 ml sunflower seeds

60 ml coconut oil

80 ml honey

250 ml dried cranberries or apricots

200 ml golden sultanas

For the yoghurt

125 ml plain yoghurt with live cultures

1 litre full-cream milk

For the muesli

Preheat the oven to 180 °C and grease a large baking tray. Combine the oats, almonds, coconut, pumpkin seeds and sunflower seeds in a mixing bowl. Melt the coconut oil and honey together in a heavy-based pot over medium heat and then stir this through the dry ingredients. Spread the mixture over the prepared baking tray and bake for 5 minutes. Remove the tray from the oven, stir the mixture and return to the oven. Repeat this process for 20–25 minutes or until the muesli is golden-brown. Remove the muesli from the oven. Add the cranberries and sultanas and stir through to distribute evenly. When the muesli has cooled down, pack it into jars. Enjoy with home-made yoghurt. The muesli will keep for 2 weeks in an airtight container or glass jar.

Makes 2 kg

For the yoghurt

Mix the yoghurt with the milk and pour into a heavy-based pot. Bring to the boil and then remove from the heat. Allow to stand in a cool and dark spot in the kitchen until the following day. Flavour your home-made yoghurt with fruit of your choice or just keep it natural.

Makes 1 litre

Breakfast bundles

These breakfast bundles or rolls are delicious for a late breakfast! You can easily make them the previous evening and bake just before serving. This is an all-in-one breakfast – all that's missing are some roasted Rosa tomatoes.



3 sheets phyllo pastry

100 g butter, melted

4 semi-hard-boiled eggs, shelled

8 rashers bacon, chopped and crisply fried

200 ml tomato *smoor* or tomato chutney

4 sprigs fresh thyme

Preheat the oven to 160 °C and spray a large baking tray with non-stick cooking spray. Brush the phyllo sheets with the melted butter. Stack the sheets and cut into four quarters, giving you four phyllo blocks three sheets thick. Thinly slice each egg lengthways and place the slices in the centre of each phyllo block. Place the bacon on top of the egg slices. Spoon the tomato *smoor* or chutney on top of the bacon and fold the four corners of each phyllo block over the filling, pressing them together where they meet to make a breakfast bundle. If you prefer, you can keep the eggs whole, place one egg in the

middle of each phyllo block and fold the corners over the egg. Place the bundles on the prepared baking tray and bake for 15 minutes or until golden-brown and crispy. Serve garnished with the sprigs of thyme. Roasted tomatoes and baked beans also complement this dish.

Enough for 4 people

It's time for book club!



Call it a tea party, a pop-in, a ladies' tea, a book club or just a get-together, call it what you will, but one thing is certain – we women enjoy getting together and chatting. Add something delicious to nibble on and you have the winning recipe for a good-old hen party!

It is here, among the chatting and eating around the tea table, that friendships become closer, problems become lighter and being a wife and mother becomes easier and more bearable. Naturally, every self-respecting country town still has some or other women's society where some women of the

community are more welcome than others, but here at my table you are always welcome. All the food is fresh and made with much love and care, and there's always room for one more. So draw nearer ... better yet, bring a friend and I will pour you a drink.



Fruit punch – with or without a kick

Remember those big glass bowls, with cups hanging on little hooks, from which wonderful punch was served? The big glass bowls have made way for big glass jugs, but the contents remain refreshingly delicious!



We did not serve any alcohol at our wedding and one of the younger guests remarked: 'I never knew one can have such a lovely time without any alcohol!'

500 ml pineapple juice

500 ml orange juice

**500 ml berry juice – cranberry juice gives the punch a
lovely colour**

1 lime, sliced

1 orange, sliced

750 ml sparkling wine (optional)

**1 litre tonic water – if you prefer a sweeter punch, use $\frac{1}{2}$
lemonade and $\frac{1}{2}$ tonic water**

Combine all the ingredients except the sparkling wine and tonic water. Add these just before serving the punch. Freeze some mint leaves, edible flowers and bits of fruit in ice cube trays and add just before serving – this will make the punch jingle!

Makes 2.5 litres

Seductive summer peach drink

This thirst quencher always sparks off a lot of interest. People are crazy about it!

500 ml peach juice – make sure it's real peach juice and not just peach-flavoured juice

4 sweet stone-free peaches, peeled and cut into pieces

30 ml sugar

juice and grated rind of 1 lime

750 ml rosé sparkling wine or ginger ale

fresh mint leaves for garnishing

Place all the ingredients except the sparkling wine or ginger ale and mint in a food processor and pulse until completely smooth. Taste and adjust if you think the punch needs a little more sugar or lime. Pour the mixture into a plastic container (a 2-litre ice-cream container is perfect) and place in the freezer. Using a fork, loosen the ice mixture after every hour in the freezer to form a sorbet. Repeat until the sorbet has frozen completely and contains loose flakes or ice crystals. Pour the sparkling wine or ginger ale into glasses and spoon some of the sorbet into each glass. Serve garnished with small mint leaves. This drink is an ideal welcoming drink to serve to the ladies attending your hen party!

Enough to quench the thirst of many people

Bacon tartlets

Bacon and cheese remain a winning combination, and these tartlets are no exception. It's a good idea to double the recipe – they freeze very well.



250 g bacon, finely chopped

250 ml grated Cheddar cheese

4 eggs

5 ml mustard powder or pre-made Dijon mustard

1 pinch cayenne pepper
40 ml chopped fresh parsley

Preheat the oven to 180 °C. Spray a 12-cup muffin pan with non-stick cooking spray. Fry the bacon until crispy and combine with the remaining ingredients. Spoon the mixture into the muffin pan and bake for about 20 minutes. Remove the tartlets from the pan and allow to cool on a wire rack. Serve with a tasty Beetroot pineapple chutney (see recipe on [p. 165](#)).

Makes 12 tartlets – the recipe can easily be doubled

The bacon can be replaced with 250 g fried mushrooms for a vegetarian dish, or with 250 g smoked snoek for variety.

Thai salad bites

This is food for conversation. Seat a bunch of chatting women around this Thai feast and you'll never get them to keep quiet. Healthy and quite delicious! Adjust the ingredients according to the number of people.

Salad bites

young spinach leaves or cos lettuce leaves

salted peanuts

spring onions, finely chopped

carrots, peeled and julienned

fresh coriander

bean sprouts

lemon grass, very finely chopped

**red and green chillies, deseeded (optional) and finely
chopped**

fresh ginger, peeled and cut into thin strips

*Soy dipping sauce (enough for 2: adjust according to the
number of people)*

125 ml dark soy sauce

15 ml honey

5 ml lime juice

a few drops of fish sauce

a few drops of sesame oil

5 ml finely chopped fresh ginger

Place each salad bite ingredient into its own bowl. Combine the sauce ingredients and serve each guest their own bowl of sauce. Guests make their own Thai rolls by rolling up the salad ingredients in a spinach leaf.

All-in-one fish dish for book club

*This dish is made in no time at all and is ideal for cooler evenings.
Just make sure that nobody in the group is allergic to shellfish.*

30 ml oil

1 onion, peeled and cut into strips

a stalk of lemongrass, bruised with a meat mallet

1 clove garlic, peeled and finely chopped

**a thumb-sized piece of fresh ginger, peeled and finely
chopped**

15 ml brown sugar

20 ml ready-made green Thai curry paste

soy sauce or fish sauce to taste

750 ml fish stock

4 × 100 g portions firm fish – such as yellowtail or hake

16 black mussels

8 medium prawns

200 g calamari rings

1 × 410 g can coconut cream

fresh basil for garnishing

Heat the oil in a large pan or Chinese wok. Place all the ingredients up to and including the soy or fish sauce in the pan and stir-fry for about 30 seconds. Add the fish stock and simmer for a few minutes to develop the flavours. Place the fish portions in the liquid and reduce the heat. Cover the pan or wok with foil and simmer for 5 minutes or until the fish is cooked. Keep the heat low to prevent the fish from falling apart. Remove the foil and add the remaining seafood. Simmer for another 5 minutes or until the mussels have opened up and the prawns are cooked through. Add the coconut cream and taste for seasoning. Serve each guest a portion of fish in a bowl and arrange the other seafood around the fish. Pour the soup over the fish, garnish with fresh basil and serve.

Enough for 4 people

Artichoke, potato and cheese tart

Very rich and very tasty. The cheesy crust goes perfectly with the robust artichoke and potato filling. Really a very filling meal!



For the crust

250 ml cake flour

250 ml grated strong mature Cheddar cheese

125 ml soft butter

5 ml mild mustard powder

For the filling

30 ml cooking oil
2 large onions, peeled and finely chopped
2 large potatoes, peeled and cubed
2.5 ml smoked paprika
6 jumbo or extra-large eggs
a pinch of salt and pepper
1 × 250 g tub plain cream cheese
125 ml cream or milk
250 g strong Cheddar cheese, grated
180 g marinated or roasted and quartered artichokes

For the crust

Spray a 25-cm tart dish with non-stick cooking spray. Place all the ingredients in a food processor and pulse until a dough starts to form. Refrigerate the dough for about 20 minutes. On a lightly floured surface, roll out the dough, then press it over the base and sides of the tart dish. Set aside until needed.

For the filling

Preheat the oven to 180 °C. Heat the oil in a pan and sauté the onions and potatoes with the paprika until soft and lightly browned. Allow to cool slightly. Combine the eggs, salt, pepper, cream cheese, cream or milk and Cheddar cheese and carefully pour into the crust. Evenly spoon the onions and potatoes over the egg mixture and arrange the artichokes on top. Bake for 30–40 minutes or until the filling feels firm to the touch. Allow to cool slightly on a wire rack. Serve for lunch topped with shavings of Parmesan cheese alongside a fresh rocket salad.

Makes 1 medium-sized tart



Chinese pork rolls with sweet and sour plum sauce

This is probably not the most diet-friendly recipe, but you should give yourself a break every now and then.



For the sweet and sour plum sauce

20 small plums

6 cloves garlic, peeled and finely chopped

1 red onion, peeled and finely chopped

12 cm piece of ginger, peeled and finely chopped

50 ml soy sauce

1 small red chilli, deseeded (optional) and finely chopped

For the filling

200 g pork mince

1 medium carrot, peeled and grated

2 spring onions, finely chopped

1 clove garlic, peeled and finely chopped

10 cm piece of ginger, peeled and finely chopped

30 ml thick soy sauce

10 ml cake flour

5–10 ml sesame oil

a pinch of salt

For the rolls

20 Chinese spring-roll sheets (available at Chinese supermarkets)

40 ml cake flour

40 ml water

oil for deep-frying

For the sweet and sour plum sauce

Halve the plums, remove the pips and then cut the halves into smaller pieces. Combine with the remaining ingredients in a saucepan over low heat and simmer for about 20 minutes. Allow to cool slightly, pour into a food processor and pulse until smooth. Pour into glass bowls and serve at room temperature with the Chinese rolls.

For the filling

Combine all the ingredients in a bowl and set aside.

For the rolls

Place a spring-roll sheet diagonally on your work surface. Combine the flour and water in a separate dish – this will be your ‘glue’. Spoon some of the filling onto the spring-roll sheet

just below the centre. Brush the edges of the sheet with the flour mixture. First fold the bottom corner over the filling and then fold the two side corners towards the centre, forming an open envelope. Now roll up the sheet from the bottom of the open envelope. Repeat with the remaining sheets. Heat the oil to about 190 °C and fry the rolls, a few at a time, until the filling is cooked and the rolls are crispy and golden-brown. Serve with the sweet and sour plum sauce.

Makes 20 pork rolls

Double apple scones – perfect for afternoon tea

The little cubes of apple give the scones a wonderful flavour and keep them moist too! Serve with a large pot of tea



225 g self-raising flour

60 ml castor sugar

2.5 ml salt

5 ml baking powder

60 ml butter, cubed

10 ml grated lemon rind

125–150 ml plain yoghurt or buttermilk

2 Granny Smith apples, peeled, cored and cut into small cubes, then drizzled with the juice of $\frac{1}{2}$ lemon to prevent browning

1 egg, beaten

Preheat the oven to 200 °C. Grease a baking tray or spray with non-stick cooking spray. Sift the flour, sugar, salt and baking powder into a mixing bowl. Using your fingertips, rub the butter into the flour until the texture resembles fine breadcrumbs. Add the lemon rind and stir through. Add 125 ml of the yoghurt to the flour and mix. If the mixture is too dry, add a little more yoghurt. Finally, add the apple cubes and mix until combined. The dough should be firm and keep its shape after being placed on the baking tray. Turn the dough out onto the baking tray, shape it into a circle with your hands and flatten to about 4 cm thick. Using a sharp knife, slice the dough into 8 wedges, but don't slice all the way through to the baking tray. Brush with the beaten egg and bake for 20–25 minutes. Serve with fresh cream and apple purée (see recipe below).

Makes 4–6 scones

Apple purée

2 large Granny Smith apples, peeled, cored and cubed

15 ml butter

30–45 ml sugar

2.5 ml ground cinnamon

a pinch of salt

100 ml water

juice and grated rind of $\frac{1}{2}$ lemon

Place all the ingredients in a pot and bring to the boil. Reduce the heat and simmer for 5–8 minutes or until the apples are soft and starting to disintegrate. Spoon the purée into a pretty dish or jar and serve warm with the apple scones.

Greek hot beef fillet salad

Definitely not your cheapest cut of meat, but fortunately you can go pretty far with a roast fillet.



For the salad dressing

60 ml red wine vinegar

60 ml lemon juice

60 ml chopped fresh origanum

4 cloves garlic, peeled

5 ml coarsely ground black pepper

7.5 ml salt

10 ml sugar

250 ml good-quality olive oil

For the salad

2 kg beef fillet

**500 g cherry tomatoes – they look beautiful in the salad if
they have been kept on the vine**

fresh rocket leaves

250 g pitted black olives

250 g feta cheese

warm pita breads or ciabatta to serve

For the salad dressing

Place all the ingredients except the oil in a food processor and mix. Gradually add the oil while pulsing so that the dressing forms an emulsion. Pour into a bottle and set aside until needed. When you are ready to marinate the meat, pour half of the salad dressing into a glass dish that is big enough for the fillet. Place the fillet in the dish, refrigerate and marinate for at least 2 hours (a whole day is even better). Turn the fillet every now and then. Add the tomatoes 10–15 minutes before the end of the marinating time so that they can marinate with the fillet.

For the salad

Preheat the oven to 200 °C. Heat a griddle pan on the stove until very hot, then sear the marinated fillet on all sides. Place the fillet into an ovenproof dish, brush with some of the marinade and roast for 20–25 minutes, depending on how well done you prefer your fillet. Place the tomatoes on a baking tray and roast for about 15 minutes. Remove the fillet and the tomatoes from the oven and allow the meat to rest for 5 minutes. Cut the fillet into thin slices and place them onto a large salad plate. Arrange the roasted tomatoes, rocket, olives and feta around the fillet and pour the remaining half of the salad dressing over the salad. Serve with warm pitas or slices of ciabatta.

Enough for 10 hens, but only 6 men

*Take a short cut by using two bottles of ready-made
Greek salad dressing – use the one with the vinegar base
and not the creamy kind.*

Tuna fishcakes with spicy mango salsa

These are the perfect summer snacks. Make small fishcakes and serve them on bamboo forks.



You can make smaller fishcakes and serve them as a snack with a delicious dip!

For the mango salsa

- 2 large mangoes, peeled and cut into small cubes**
- 1 small red onion, peeled and finely chopped**
- 1 small red chilli, deseeded (optional) and finely chopped**
- grated rind and juice of 1 lime**

10 ml sugar
a pinch of salt
fresh coriander for garnishing

For the fishcakes

1 kg fresh tuna or hake – if you can't find any, use 2 × 410 g cans salmon, deboned
3 spring onions, chopped – use both the green and the white parts
grated rind and juice of 2 limes
10 ml salt
10 ml coarsely ground black pepper
1 small red chilli, deseeded (optional) and finely chopped
250 ml fresh breadcrumbs
2 eggs – if using fresh fish use 3 eggs
2 handfuls fresh coriander leaves
oil for frying

For the mango salsa

Combine all the ingredients, taste and adjust the salt and sweetness to your taste.

For the fishcakes

If using fresh fish, use a sharp knife and chop the fish very finely. You could chop it in a food processor, but if you do it by hand the texture of the fishcakes will be coarser and they will taste better. Combine all the ingredients in a bowl and set aside for a while to allow the flavours to develop. Heat oil in a pan; it should be quite hot. Test the oil temperature by dropping a small piece of bread into it. If the bread fries immediately and the oil forms small bubbles, then it is ready. Meanwhile make 16 small fishcakes by forming 2–3 tablespoonfuls of the mixture per fishcake into a round. Fry the fishcakes in the oil until golden-brown and cooked. Drain the fishcakes on paper towel and serve with the mango salsa.

Makes 16 fishcakes



For what we are about to receive



For as long as I can remember, Grandma always told us: ‘Better to eat a dry crust of bread with peace of mind than to have a banquet in a house full of trouble.’ For many years I thought this was just one of Grandma’s witticisms, then one day I found the same saying in Proverbs 17:1!

Grandma was a stately yet plain woman, and she taught me something really valuable: it’s not the lavishness with which you serve people that counts, but rather how you make them

feel around your table. It is this feeling that will keep them coming back! Here, around the table, families and friends get together to cement relationships and create memories that will remain with them for a lifetime. The food on the table can be a simple pot of soup with home-made bread or a posh Sunday lunch like leg of lamb so tender that the meat falls off the bone, with delicious potatoes roasted to a crisp in goose fat.

At my table I take my family to faraway places with a simple red-hot Mexican meal or all the way to England for a savoury beef pie with feather-light hand-made puff pastry. The main ingredient? Always love! Love for the abundance in our lives, but more importantly love for one another ... food love ... cherishing love!



Chicken strips and pineapple in apricot sauce

A lovely sweet and sour combination, ideal for lazy weekend food!

8 boneless chicken breasts, skin removed

140 ml cake flour

salt and pepper to taste

75 ml oil for frying

100 g butter for frying

2 medium onions, peeled and sliced

2 cloves garlic, peeled and crushed

1 × 440 g can pineapple pieces, drained

250 ml apricot juice

200 ml good-quality chutney

chopped fresh parsley for garnishing

Cut the chicken breasts into thin strips. Combine the flour, salt and pepper in a clean plastic bag and add the chicken strips. Close up the bag and shake until each chicken strip is covered in the flour mixture. Heat 60 ml of the oil and the butter in a pan and fry a few chicken strips at a time, until golden-brown. Heat the remaining oil in another pan. Sauté the onion and garlic until the onion is soft and translucent. Add the pineapple, apricot juice and chutney and simmer for a few minutes. Add the fried chicken strips and cook until heated through. Taste and add salt if necessary. Serve on rice or lovely soft noodles. Scatter a bit of chopped parsley on top.

Enough for 6 people

Busy mom chicken bake

1 ready-bought roast chicken, bones removed and cut into cubes

500 g pasta shells, cooked according to the packet instructions

1 litre Greek yoghurt

1 × 45 g packet white onion soup powder

salt and pepper to taste

1 × 125 g packet cheese and onion crisps

Preheat the oven to 180 °C. Combine all the ingredients, except the crisps, and spoon into an ovenproof dish. Crush the crisps and sprinkle over the top. Bake for 30–40 minutes and serve with a lovely green salad.

Enough for 6 people

Instead of crisps, you could use 500 ml fresh breadcrumbs, 100 ml chopped fresh parsley and a little grated Parmesan cheese. Mix with olive oil to form damp crumbs. Sprinkle over the chicken and bake as above.

Tropical chicken on sticks

When we braai, we always have chicken sosaties. Sometimes it can get rather monotonous if you always cook the sosaties in the same way. Although chicken sosaties are often quite dry, this marinade makes the meat tender and juicy.

For the marinade

1 × 410 g can coconut milk
15–30 ml curry powder, mild or hot to taste
grated rind and juice of 1 lime
30 ml chopped fresh coriander
5 ml turmeric
salt and pepper to taste
30 ml apricot jam

For the chicken

6 boneless chicken breasts
**1 large mango, cut into cubes – if it's not mango season,
use fresh or canned pineapple**
12 pickling onions, peeled
12 fresh lemon or lime leaves
sosatie sticks (soaked in water to prevent burning)

For the marinade

Combine all the ingredients for the marinade in a glass or plastic bowl and set aside until needed.

For the chicken

Cut the chicken into bite-sized pieces and add to the marinade. Refrigerate and marinate for at least 2 hours. If you are going to cook the sosaties in the oven, preheat the oven to 180 °C. Skewer the chicken pieces, mango cubes and onions onto sosatie sticks, placing a lemon leaf in between each ingredient. Braai over the coals, fry in a griddle pan or roast in the oven

until cooked through. Brush with the remaining marinade while cooking.

Enough for 4 people



Sticky yummy spatchcock chicken

This chicken is lip-smackingly good. It's even better if you can marinate it beforehand and leave the cooking to the man of the house so that you can kick back and relax. Make sure you have plenty of serviettes at hand, because everyone's fingers will be deliciously sticky.



For the marinade

45 ml lime juice

45 ml lemon juice

100 ml fresh orange juice

50 ml soy sauce

**1–2 red chillies, chopped – if you like some heat, use 2
9 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped
50 ml grated fresh ginger
100 ml sesame oil
50 ml fish sauce
100 ml brown sugar
50 ml white vinegar
100 ml honey
15 ml fennel seeds**

For the chicken

**1 large chicken or 8 chicken portions such as drumsticks
and thighs
salt**

For the marinade

Combine all the marinade ingredients. If using a whole large chicken, place it on a work surface and cut along either side of the backbone using a very sharp knife or kitchen scissors. Remove the backbone. Turn the chicken over with the open side facing down. Flatten the chicken with your hands – you'll hear the bones crack. Season the chicken with salt, inside and out. Place the butterflied chicken or chicken portions in a glass dish and pour over the marinade. Refrigerate and marinate the chicken for at least 2 hours – a whole day would be even better.

For the chicken

Once the chicken has been marinated, preheat the oven to 180 °C (or fire up the Weber). Place the chicken on a wire rack in an oven dish and roast for at least 1 hour to ensure that the meat is cooked through. Brush with the remaining marinade every 10–15 minutes. Serve with a tangy coleslaw and boiled baby potatoes.

Makes 1 chicken (double the recipe and you'll have lots of

leftover chicken for salads or sandwiches)

Discard any leftover marinade after you've roasted the chicken. It can't be kept and used again if you've already marinated raw chicken in it.

Creamy chicken stew with herbed dumplings

I love making this stew on cold winter days when you need a good plate of comfort food. You can taste the nostalgia of an old-fashioned chicken stew, but the trendy, almost Italian dumplings make this dish new and exciting.



For the chicken stew

- 12 chicken portions such as thighs and drumsticks
- salt and pepper
- 200 ml cake flour

80 ml olive oil
80 g butter
2 large onions, peeled and finely chopped
3–4 cloves garlic, peeled and finely chopped
250 g mushrooms
500 ml light beer or apple cider
500 ml good-quality chicken stock
a few sprigs of fresh thyme
250 g frozen peas (optional)
250 g fresh baby carrots (optional)

For the roux

50 ml butter
50 ml cake flour
200 ml cream
3 ml salt

For the herbed dumplings

2 eggs
about 125 ml cooking oil
about 125 ml milk
500 g self-raising flour
10 ml baking powder
5 ml salt
10 ml fresh thyme or 5 ml dried
30 ml chopped fresh parsley
80 ml finely grated Parmesan cheese

For the chicken stew

Preheat the oven to 180 °C. Rinse the chicken portions and pat them dry with paper towel. Season to taste and sprinkle with the flour. Heat the olive oil and butter in a pan over medium heat and fry the chicken portions until golden-brown. Remove the chicken and set aside. Fry the onion, garlic and mushrooms

in the same pan until cooked. Transfer the onion, garlic and mushrooms to an ovenproof dish, add the beer or apple cider, chicken stock, thyme and chicken and cover. Roast for about 30 minutes, then add the peas and carrots (if using) and roast for a further 10–15 minutes.

For the roux

When the chicken is done, make the roux. Melt the butter over low heat and mix in the flour until it forms a smooth paste. Stir in the cream and add salt as required. Add the roux to the stew and stir through. It will thicken without forming lumps.

For the herbed dumplings

While the chicken is cooking, make the dumplings. Break one egg into a standard cup (250 ml), fill halfway with cooking oil and then fill to the top with milk. Pour the contents of the cup into a mixing bowl. Repeat this process with the remaining egg, then whisk until combined. Combine the remaining ingredients, add to the egg mixture and stir to form a soft but manageable dough. Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured surface and roll out to about 5 cm thick. Using a round cookie cutter, press out small dumplings and add them to the chicken stew. Roast uncovered in the oven for about 15 minutes or until the dumplings have risen and browned.

Enough for 6 people

- *This dish is so rich that it needs no accompaniments besides a simple green leaf salad or perhaps steamed green beans.*
- *The dumplings work just as well on a mellow beef or lamb shank pie.*

Fiery Mexican chicken burgers with Mexican salsa

Children love these burgers. I think it's the bit of kick-in-the-backside heat of the chillies that makes them feel as though they are part of the 'grown-up' world. I prefer making my own chicken mince – the texture is much coarser and, in my opinion, much better!



For the chicken patties

500 g chicken mince

1 small red onion, peeled and finely chopped

1 small red chilli, deseeded (optional) and finely chopped
125 ml chopped fresh coriander
300 ml fresh breadcrumbs
5 ml ground cumin
5 ml salt
a few grinds of black pepper
grated rind and juice of 1 lime

For the Mexican salsa

4 small tomatoes, quartered and seeded
1 small red onion, peeled and quartered
1/4 each of yellow, green and red pepper, deseeded and chopped
1 small red chilli, deseeded (optional) and chopped
30 ml chopped fresh coriander
15 ml red wine vinegar
10 ml sugar
salt and pepper to taste
125 ml canned or fresh whole-kernel corn

For the chicken patties

Place all the ingredients in a mixing bowl and mix well. Dampen your hands with water and shape into 4 patties. Braai the burgers on an open fire or fry them on the stove top in a griddle pan in some olive oil. Cook until both sides have browned and they are cooked through. Serve in a soft bread rolls with salsa, slices of avocado and a bit of sour cream.

For the Mexican salsa

Place all the ingredients for the salsa, except the corn, in a food processor and pulse briefly (be careful not to chop the ingredients too finely). Stir through the corn and serve with the burgers.

Enough for 4 people

Roast baby chickens (poussins)

If you arrive at the table with an oven dish of these roast chickens, you can be sure compliments will be forthcoming. The meat of younger chickens is wonderfully juicy and the herb butter makes the skin lovely and crispy.



For the herb butter

250 g butter

grated rind and juice of 1 orange

15 ml chopped fresh thyme – leaves only

15 ml chopped fresh parsley

1 small red chilli, deseeded (optional) and chopped

For the chicken

6 baby chickens

salt and pepper

For the herb butter

Place all the ingredients for the herb butter in a food processor and pulse until combined. Set aside until needed.

For the chicken

Preheat the oven to 180 °C. Clean the baby chickens and remove the excess skin. Cover the end of each drumstick with foil (otherwise they will burn very easily). Season the chickens inside and out with salt and pepper. Loosen the skin with your hands, but work carefully so as not to tear it. Be especially careful in the breast area. Insert some of the herb butter underneath the skin. Place the chickens in an oven dish and roast for about 10 minutes. Melt a bit of herb butter and brush the chickens with it, then roast for a further 30–35 minutes. Serve on flavoured couscous (see recipe below) with the delicious pan juices and steamed green beans.

Enough for 6 people

Flavoured couscous

250 g couscous

450 ml hot chicken stock

100 g flaked almonds

grated rind of 1 orange

100 ml chopped fresh parsley

rose petals for garnishing

Place the couscous in a glass dish and add the chicken stock. Set aside for about 5 minutes until the couscous has swollen and is feather light. Dry-roast the almonds in a clean pan. Keep an eye on the pan to make sure that the almonds don't burn. Add the almonds, orange rind and parsley to the couscous and stir through. Sprinkle some rose petals over the couscous and serve with the baby chickens.

Chicken liver pâté with green peppercorns

Years ago chicken liver pâté was very popular and I think my Mom wrecked a food processor by making such a lot of it. Here I set the pâté in the form of a loaf for a new twist on an old recipe.



15 ml olive oil

1 medium onion, peeled and finely chopped

2 cloves garlic, peeled and finely chopped

500 g chicken livers, cleaned and left in water overnight in the fridge

15 ml brandy

15 ml Madeira wine or port

**10 ml chopped fresh thyme or origanum
salt and pepper to taste
juice of 1 lemon
100 ml fresh cream
100 ml melted butter
100 ml whole green peppercorns
100 ml melted butter – you only need this once the pâté
has set
capers, pomegranate seeds, cherries and whole pink
peppercorns for garnishing**

Heat the olive oil in a pan and sauté the onion for a few minutes until it starts browning, then add the garlic. When the onion and garlic are soft, add the chicken livers and fry for 8–10 minutes, until brown on the outside but still a bit pink on the inside. Pour the brandy and Madeira wine or port over the chicken livers and flambé. When the flames die down, add the thyme or origanum, salt, pepper and lemon juice. Taste and adjust seasoning if necessary. Place the contents of the pan into a food processor and pulse until smooth. Add the cream, melted butter and green peppercorns and mix by hand until combined. Line a small bread pan with cling wrap and pour the pâté into it. Refrigerate overnight to set. When the pâté has set, pour over the melted butter. Allow the butter to harden before slicing. Cut into thin slices and serve garnished with capers, pomegranate seeds and cherries. This pâté is lovely with hot, toasted farm bread and pickles.

Enough for 6–10 people as a starter



Roast chicken and strawberry salad with granadilla dressing

Perfect for a hot summer afternoon when the children come home from school. Children enjoy the sweetness of the fruit and mom can relax knowing that they're getting a healthy meal. It's a win-win situation for everyone!



For the dressing

**1 × 110 g can granadilla pulp or the pulp of 4 granadillas
grated rind and juice of 1 orange
grated rind and juice of 1 lemon**

30 ml white balsamic vinegar

15–20 ml sugar

salt to taste

125 ml canola oil

For the salad

4 handfuls fresh rocket or salad leaves of your choice

1 roast chicken – I usually make two chickens when we have roast chicken on a Sunday

250 g strawberries, washed, hulled and quartered

250 g seedless sultana grapes, washed and halved

100 g feta cheese

a few fresh mint leaves

pea sprouts or watercress for garnishing

For the dressing

Place all the ingredients except the oil in a food processor and mix. Add the oil in a gradual trickle until the dressing thickens. Refrigerate until needed.

For the salad

Arrange the salad leaves on a pretty salad platter. Cut the chicken into smaller pieces and scatter on top of the salad leaves. Arrange the strawberries, grapes, feta cheese and mint around the chicken, then pour the chilled dressing over the salad. Scatter the pea sprouts or watercress over the top and serve with fresh bread rolls or whole-wheat bread.

Enough for 4–6 people



Nutty crumbed chicken slices

A delicious midweek meal, ready in a jiffy! If someone in your family is gluten intolerant, you can replace the bread with another 100 g of nuts.



4 chicken breasts

4 slices white bread

100 g salted cashew nuts or almonds

125 ml chopped fresh parsley

3 eggs, lightly beaten with a fork

salt and pepper

oil for frying

Carefully butterfly each chicken breast; do not halve completely. Using a meat mallet, slightly flatten each chicken breast. Place the bread, nuts and parsley in a food processor and chop until the texture resembles breadcrumbs. Pour the eggs into a dish and place the crumbs in another dish. Season the chicken breasts with salt and pepper, then dip into the egg and cover with the crumb mixture. Refrigerate for at least 30 minutes. Heat some oil in a pan and fry the chicken until golden-brown and cooked through. Serve with mashed potatoes and a simple tomato and onion salad.

Enough for 4 people

Chicken curry with a citrus kick

45 ml oil

1 large onion, peeled and finely chopped

1 clove garlic, peeled and finely chopped

10 cm piece of ginger, peeled and finely chopped

5 ml ground cinnamon

5 ml ground dried ginger

5 ml turmeric

15–25 ml curry powder, mild or hot to taste

salt to taste

8 chicken portions, such as thighs and drumsticks

1 litre chicken stock

500 g cherry tomatoes

100 g candied orange rind

100 ml dried sultanas

15 ml cake flour, if needed

fresh coriander for garnishing

Heat the oil in a heavy-based pot on the stove and sauté the onion, garlic and fresh ginger. When the onion is soft, add all the dry ingredients and stir for about 1 minute. Add the chicken pieces and cook until brown on all sides. Add the stock and reduce the heat. Cover and simmer for about 40 minutes. Add the tomatoes, orange rind and sultanas and cook for a few more minutes, uncovered, until the tomatoes are soft and most of the liquid has evaporated. If necessary, use the flour to thicken the sauce a little. Garnish with fresh coriander and serve with jasmine rice.

Enough for 4 people

Mexican beef salad bites

Healthy and sociable. Everyone helps themselves from the dishes on the table. Make sure there are serviettes – plates are not required.

For the beef salad bites

- 30 ml olive oil**
- 2 onions, peeled and finely chopped**
- 4 cloves garlic, peeled and finely chopped**
- 5 ml chilli flakes**
- 15 ml ground coriander**
- 15 ml ground cumin**
- 1 kg lean beef mince**
- 1 red pepper, deseeded and finely chopped**
- 80 ml good-quality tomato sauce**
- 80 ml tomato paste**
- 250 ml boiling water**
- 25 g 70 % dark chocolate**
- salt and coarsely ground black pepper to taste**
- 2 × 410 g cans red kidney beans, washed and drained**

For serving

- salad leaves**
- sour cream**
- chopped fresh chillies**
- fresh coriander leaves**

For the beef salad bites

Heat the oil in a pan and sauté the onions until soft. Add the garlic and stir for about 1 minute until cooked. Stir in the spices until combined. Add the mince and fry until the meat starts browning. Add all the other ingredients, except the beans, and cook for 45 minutes. Add a little more water if necessary. Add the beans and simmer for about 3 minutes.

Taste and adjust seasoning.

For serving

Place the salad leaves, sour cream, chillies and coriander in individual bowls. Place these along with the bowl of mince in the centre of the table. Spoon a little mince onto a salad leaf, top with some chilli, coriander and a scoop of sour cream and enjoy!

Enough for 10 people



Tasty beer, beef and baby onion pie

This is a corker of a pie that will easily feed 8 people. The whole onions, cooked in balsamic vinegar, give a lot of character to the pie.

For the filling

125 ml cake flour

salt and pepper

2 kg beef cubes

100 ml olive oil

2 × 340 ml cans dark beer

4 sprigs fresh rosemary

500–750 ml good-quality beef stock

a bunch of leeks, washed – use both the white and green parts

30 ml butter

12–15 pickling onions, remove the outer skin, but don't cut off the bottoms

15 ml sugar

30 ml balsamic vinegar

For the crust

2 × 250 g rolls puff pastry

1 egg, lightly beaten

For the meat filling

Preheat the oven to 180 °C. Place the flour, salt, pepper and beef cubes in a clean plastic bag and shake until each cube is covered with flour. Heat 60 ml of the olive oil in an ovenproof pot and fry a few beef cubes at a time until browned, then remove and fry another batch. Keep the fried meat warm and repeat until all the beef cubes have been browned. This process takes a bit of time, but it makes a big difference to the pie, believe me! When all the meat has been browned, return it to

the pot with the beer, rosemary and 500 ml of the stock. Place in the oven and let it cook slowly for 2 hours. The flour will thicken the sauce, so have a look at it after 1 hour to ensure that the meat doesn't burn. Add the remaining stock if necessary. Cut the leeks into thin rings. Heat 15 ml of the remaining oil in a pan and fry the leeks until lightly browned. Add the remaining oil and butter to the same pan and fry the onions until browned. Add the sugar and balsamic vinegar and reduce until the mixture has a sticky consistency. Add the onion mixture to the pot of beef and stir lightly. Taste and adjust the salt and pepper if necessary. Remove from the heat and allow the meat to cool.

For the crust

On a lightly floured surface, roll out both rolls of puff pastry just a bit and press one roll over the base and sides of a 5 cm-deep pie dish. Spoon the meat mixture into the dish and cover with the remaining puff pastry. Dampen the edges of the pastry with a little water and press them together with your fingers to make a pattern. Brush the top of the pastry with the beaten egg and bake for 45 minutes or until the pastry is nicely puffed and golden-brown.

Enough for 8 people

- *The filling can be made a day in advance.*
- *This pie freezes well. Prepare the pie and freeze before baking. Place the frozen pie in the oven and bake for 50 minutes.*
- *Serve with sweet garden peas, carrots and parsley potatoes.*

Flintstone beef rib

As a child Fred Flintstone was my favourite cartoon character, and I was rather annoyed years later when they created the real human character in a movie – it just wasn't the same. I think the Flintstones would have enjoyed these chunks of meat.



For the marinade

500 ml orange juice

125 ml balsamic vinegar

4 cloves garlic, peeled and finely chopped

10 ml chilli flakes

125 ml olive oil
125 ml Worcestershire sauce
15 ml soy sauce
15 ml chilli sauce
15 ml mustard powder
10 ml smoked paprika
15 ml dried origanum
5 ml salt
30 ml honey

For the rib

3 kg beef short rib, cut into smaller pieces

For the marinade

Combine all the ingredients for the marinade, except the honey, in a large glass or plastic bowl. Add the ribs to the marinade and refrigerate for at least 3 hours.

For the rib

Preheat the oven to 180 °C. Transfer the ribs and the marinade to a stainless-steel oven dish and cover with a lid or foil. Roast in the oven for about 1½ hours or until the ribs are very tender. Remove the dish from the oven, place the ribs on a wire rack and continue roasting, uncovered, in the oven for about 10 minutes or on the braai for 10–15 minutes. Pour the leftover marinade into a small saucepan placed over medium heat, add the honey and reduce until slightly thickened. Continuously brush the ribs with the marinade. Serve with a potato salad and Herbed garlic bread (see recipe on p. 105).

Enough for 6 people

Farm pizza

This is weekend food at its best and the men will love it!

20 ml olive oil

2 large onions, peeled and sliced

1 kg good-quality boerewors

1 kg bread dough – you can buy it at a bakery

500 ml good-quality tomato sauce

900 g mozzarella cheese, grated – the best you can afford

fresh basil or rocket leaves

chopped red pepper (optional)

Preheat the oven to 200 °C. Heat the oil in a pan and fry the onions until golden-brown but not mushy. Remove the onions from the pan and set aside. Remove the boerewors meat from its casing and roll into small meatballs. Fry these in the previously used pan until nicely browned. Divide the dough into 6 balls and roll each out to 5 mm thick to make a medium-size pizza base. Place each pizza base onto a pizza tile or pan and spread with a generous layer of tomato sauce. Arrange the caramelised onions and meatballs on each pizza and cover with the cheese. Bake for 10–15 minutes or until the pizza base is cooked through. Serve topped with basil or rocket leaves and red pepper if desired.

Enough for 6 people

- *Get everyone involved and let each guest roll out his or her own pizza.*
- *You could also fry the sausage meat as you would any mince, without making meatballs. In this case you would just spoon it onto the pizza.*
- *Ask for clay tiles at the hardware shop – they work perfectly for pizzas.*



Middle-of-the-week tin pie

In her handwritten recipe book, my Mom has a recipe called 'Versatile batter for many uses'! We laugh about her dough because wherever I go, people ask me for the recipe. If the thought of making your own dough drives you to panic, this is the recipe for you!

For the meat filling

50 ml olive oil

1 onion, peeled and finely chopped

1 clove garlic, peeled and finely chopped

1 kg beef mince

30 ml Worcestershire sauce

salt and coarsely ground black pepper to taste

250 ml beef stock

1 × 340 g can whole-kernel corn

1 × 70 g can tomato paste

20 ml gravy powder

For the dough

250 ml self-raising flour

a pinch of salt

1 egg

about 125 ml oil

about 125 ml milk

a few raw onion rings

For the meat filling

Preheat the oven to 180 °C. Heat the oil in an ovenproof pot and sauté the onion and garlic until soft. Add the mince, loosen with a fork and fry until browned. Add the remaining ingredients, stir through until combined and cook for about 10 minutes. Make sure the meat mixture doesn't burn. Add a little water if it looks too dry. Allow to cool, then spoon into a pie

dish.

For the dough

Place the flour and salt in a small mixing bowl. Break the egg into a standard cup (250 ml), fill the cup halfway with cooking oil and then fill to the top with milk. Add the egg mixture to the flour and mix until the batter has the consistency of a thick white sauce. Pour the batter over the cooled mince and arrange the onion rings on top. When the batter rises, the onion rings will make a lovely pattern in the dough. Bake for 25–30 minutes or until the dough is golden-brown. Serve with steamed vegetables and beetroot salad.

Enough for 4–6 people

Jacob's ladder beef

This is my brother's favourite dish when he comes to visit my parents, so we all know that we will be eating this beef at some stage during the long December holidays.



**2 kg deboned brisket or 2.5 kg brisket on the bone
salt and coarsely ground black pepper
1 litre 100% peach juice
100 ml soy sauce
2 onions, peeled and finely chopped
250 ml good-quality mild chutney**

a few sprigs of fresh thyme, chopped

Remove and discard most of the fat from the brisket. Season the brisket with salt and pepper and place in a stainless-steel oven dish. Mix the remaining ingredients and pour over the brisket. Cover the dish with foil or a lid and marinate in the fridge for a few hours or overnight. Preheat the oven to 180 °C. Roast the meat for about 2 hours, remove the foil or lid as soon as the meat is tender, and roast uncovered for a further 10–15 minutes. Remove the meat from the dish and allow it to rest for at least 10 minutes before carving into thin slices. If the leftover juices are very watery, boil to reduce or thicken with a little cornflour. Serve the brisket with the gravy and vegetables of your choice, such as whole or mashed potatoes, green beans and carrots.

Enough for 10–12 people

The leftover meat can be used in sandwiches or even frittatas.



Best-in-the-country beef and mustard sandwiches

During the holidays my Mom always had corned beef in the fridge. We never even had to wonder what was on the menu for lunch ... beef and mustard sandwiches, naturally.

For the corned beef

1.5 kg corned beef (available at any supermarket)

For the mustard sauce

1 × 385 g can condensed milk

50 ml white vinegar

20 ml mustard powder

30 ml smooth apricot jam

For the corned beef

Place the corned beef, still in the plastic bag into which it has been sealed, in a pot and cover with water. Bring to the boil and then reduce the heat so that the meat can cook slowly for 1½ hours (30 minutes per 500 g) and then for an extra 30 minutes. When done, leave the meat to cool overnight in the cooking water. The next day, remove it from the plastic and keep it in a container in the fridge. This meat lasts for weeks and makes the most delicious sandwiches with fresh rocket, tomato, pickles and mustard sauce.

For the mustard sauce

Pour the condensed milk into a small glass bowl. Combine the vinegar and mustard powder in a separate bowl and mix to a smooth paste, then add this to the condensed milk. Make sure there are no lumps in the vinegar and mustard mixture, otherwise your mustard will be lumpy. Mix in the apricot jam and store in a glass jar. The mustard might taste bitter at first, but the flavour develops over time.

Enough for a multitude



Swanky beef fillet with herb butter

This is a dish to make if there's something to celebrate, like Dad's raise or the children's achievements. If it's Mom who needs to be spoilt, this recipe is easy enough for Dad to make. Just leave Easy Cooking from Nina's Kitchen open at this page on the kitchen table, go and relax, and Dad will get the message! (That is to say if you've brought your children up properly!)

1.5 kg beef fillet

15 ml balsamic vinegar

100 ml olive oil

30 ml coarsely ground black pepper

30 ml coarsely ground coriander

30 ml dried origanum

30 ml dried thyme

Remove all the sinews from the fillet or ask your butcher to do it for you. Combine the vinegar and oil and rub the mixture over the fillet. Combine the pepper and herbs and sprinkle evenly on your work surface. Roll the fillet in the herbs until completely covered and allow to stand for 30 minutes. Cut the fillet into 6 slices. Heat a griddle until smoking hot and fry each fillet for 6–14 minutes (depending on the thickness of the meat as well as how well done you would like your meat – see table below) on each side until it loosens from the bottom of the griddle. Repeat until all the fillet slices are cooked. Don't fiddle with the meat if it sticks. Allow the meat to rest for at least 10–15 minutes before serving with Herb butter (see recipe on p. 164).

Enough for 4–6 people, even more if the fillet is bigger

How long do I cook the perfect steak?

Important: the times given in the table are the total cooking times for both sides. Turn the meat halfway through the given times.

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Werkdagen opinkat				
	16-1245 minutes			
	12-108 minutes			
	20-26 minutes			

Pork sausages with quick apple and onion chutney

It's essential to use pork sausages of the highest quality for this recipe. Make sure you buy them from a reliable source.



For the apple and onion chutney

15 ml brown sugar

50 ml water

30 ml white or apple cider vinegar

2 large green apples, peeled, cored, cubed and kept in water to prevent browning

2.5 ml ground ginger
2.5 ml ground cinnamon
1 star anise
2 whole cloves
1 large onion, peeled and finely chopped
salt and pepper

For the pork sausages

15 ml olive oil
8 good-quality pork sausages

For the apple and onion chutney

Place the sugar, water and vinegar in a heavy-based pot and bring to the boil. Boil for 1 minute, then reduce the heat. Drain the apples and combine with all the spices and the onion. Add this to the vinegar mixture and simmer for about 15 minutes. Add a little more water if it looks too dry. Season with salt and pepper. Taste and adjust if you think the chutney should be a little sweeter or tart.

For the pork sausages

Heat the oil in a pan and fry the pork sausages until cooked. Serve on buttery mashed potatoes with the apple and onion chutney.

Enough for 4 people

The apple and onion chutney also complements cold meat and cheese, and will cheer up any sandwich.

Oven-roasted pork belly



This is by far my favourite meat dish. If I had to choose a last meal before leaving my earthly dwelling, this pork belly would be it. Simple, but delicious!

1.2 kg pork belly, deboned

15–20 ml whole coriander seeds

15–20 ml salt

10 ml coarsely ground black pepper

Cut slits in the pork belly right through the fat up to the meat. Preheat the oven to 180 °C. Sear the coriander seeds in a hot pan and then grind in a coffee grinder or using a pestle and

mortar. Combine the salt, pepper and coriander and rub the mixture all over the pork belly and into the slits. Place the pork belly on a wire rack in an oven dish and roast for at least 2 hours. When the crackling is crispy and the meat is cooked through, it's ready. Check if the meat is cooked through by inserting a fork – the pork should be so tender that the fork is easily inserted. Serve with potatoes, roasted butternut and a lovely green salad.

Enough for 6 people

Give the meal an Oriental twist by adding 10 ml Chinese 5 spice to the rubbing mixture. Follow the above method, cut into slivers and serve with feather-light Chinese pancakes, fresh coriander and a soy dipping sauce (see recipe for Thai salad bites on p. 33).

Balsamic pork neck chops

This is good winter food, and the best thing is that the oven does all the work! Pork neck chops are nice and tender and the balsamic vinegar makes them even tastier.

6 pork neck or shoulder chops

salt and pepper

50 ml olive oil

3 large onions, peeled and sliced

2 sprigs fresh thyme, chopped

250 ml good-quality balsamic vinegar

10–15 ml white sugar

juice of 1 lemon

Preheat the oven to 180 °C. Season the chops with salt and pepper and place in an ovenproof dish. Heat the olive oil in a pan and sauté the onions and thyme until the onions are soft and start to brown. Add the vinegar and cook until it evaporates. Add the sugar and stir through. Taste to see if you need to add salt. Add the lemon juice and stir through. This should result in a lovely sweet and sour combination. Spoon the onion mixture over the chops and cover the dish with foil. Roast for about 1 hour, then remove the foil. Return to the oven and roast uncovered until the chops are brown. Serve with Parmesan mashed potatoes (see recipe below) and peas.

Enough for 6 people



Parmesan mashed potatoes

1 kg potatoes, peeled

5 ml salt

45 ml butter

100–125 ml hot milk

100 ml grated Parmesan cheese

2 ml grated fresh nutmeg

Place the potatoes and salt in a pot and fill with water until the potatoes are just covered. Bring to the boil and cook the potatoes until soft. When the potatoes are soft, drain and then mash until smooth. Add the butter, milk, Parmesan cheese and nutmeg and mix well. Serve with the balsamic pork neck chops.

Oriental pork bites with sweet-chilli sauce

Ideal for entertaining! Just be sure to make enough, because these pork bites are quick to disappear from the table.

For the pork bites

600 g good-quality pork sausages
1–2 spring onions, finely chopped
80 ml finely chopped fresh coriander
12 stalks lemongrass
2 limes, quartered

Sweet-chilli sauce (makes 300 ml)

250 ml sugar
125 ml white vinegar
2 red chillies, deseeded and finely chopped
30 ml finely chopped fresh coriander
a pinch of salt
a sprig of coriander for serving

For the pork bites

Remove the pork meat from the casings and place in a mixing bowl. Add the spring onions and coriander and mix well. Form 12 meatballs and flatten slightly. Skewer one lemongrass stalk lengthways through each meatball. Fry in a griddle pan or braai over the coals until cooked through. Serve the lime quarters on the side.

For the sweet-chilli sauce

Heat all the ingredients except the sprig of coriander, in a small saucepan until the sugar has melted. Bring to the boil and cook for about 4 minutes to thicken the sauce slightly. Add the sprig of coriander and serve as a dipping sauce or use as a basting sauce. Serve the sauce with the Oriental pork bites (see above) on a bed of sticky jasmine rice.

Enough for 6 people



Posh oven-roasted pork neck with figs, nuts and goat's-milk cheese

This pork roll is very showy and will be right at home on the menu at any red-carpet reception. It is so easy to make, though, that you can first try it out on your family for Sunday lunch.

1.5 kg deboned pork neck

80 ml Dijon mustard

salt and pepper

5–6 preserved green figs

200 g goat's-milk cheese

100 g chopped walnuts

2 m butcher's twine

60 ml olive oil

500 ml apple cider

125 ml fresh cream

Preheat the oven to 170 °C. Using a sharp knife, cut a long slit into one side of the pork neck – this forms a hollow into which you pack the filling. Rub the mustard all over the pork neck and season liberally with salt and pepper. Pack the figs in a row inside the slit. Slice the goat's-milk cheese into long strips and pack on top of the figs. Lastly, pack the chopped nuts on top of the cheese. Now close the slit and tie up the pork neck with butcher's twine. Heat the olive oil in an ovenproof pan and fry the pork neck until browned on all sides. Add 300 ml of the apple cider. Cover with a lid or with foil and transfer to the oven. Turn the meat every now and again, and remove the lid or foil after 1 hour, then roast uncovered for a further 30 minutes. Check if the meat is cooked by inserting a skewer into the thickest part; if the juices run clear it is ready. Place the meat on a platter, cover with foil and allow to rest. Return the previously used pan to the stovetop and add the remaining apple cider. Scrape the bottom to loosen all the meaty bits. Cook until it has reduced a bit, then add the cream. You can pour this cream sauce over the pork, or you can cut the pork

and arrange it in the sauce on a platter. If you are preparing for a very swanky occasion, place slices of meat on plates and spoon over the sauce. Season with salt and pepper if necessary. Serve with crispy roast potatoes and steamed broccoli.

Enough for 6–8 people

Quick Oriental pork fillet

Get home at five and eat at five thirty – that's how quick and easy this dish is. And the bonus is that there are hardly any dishes to wash.



500 g pork fillet

20 ml oil – not olive oil

1 clove garlic, peeled and finely chopped

10 ml chopped fresh ginger

250 g young green beans, topped and tailed

125 ml hoisin sauce

juice of 1 lemon

salt to taste

10–15 ml honey

15 ml sesame seeds, roasted in a dry pan

Cut the pork fillet into 1 cm-thick slices and set aside. Heat the oil in a wok or large pan and fry the garlic and ginger very quickly without burning it. Add the pork slices and fry for 3–4 minutes until browned on both sides. Add the green beans and stir-fry until the beans are cooked but not too soft. Add the hoisin sauce, lemon juice and salt, then add the honey and stir through. Serve over jasmine rice or egg noodles and top with the sesame seeds.

Enough for 4 people



Deboned loin of lamb with sundried tomatoes and feta

This is a posh meat dish for Sunday lunch. The dish contains no bones, which means the meat will go far. There might even be enough left over for the next day's sandwiches!



Get to know your butcher and he will go the extra mile for you – always!

For the meat

**2 kg loin of lamb – ask the butcher to debone it
salt and pepper**

240 g marinated sundried tomatoes
250 g feta cheese, crumbled
10 ml finely chopped fresh mint or rosemary
about 1.5 m butcher's twine
30 ml olive oil

For the sauce

100 ml water (if needed)
100 ml white wine
30 ml oil
30 ml cake flour

For the meat

Preheat the oven to 180 °C. Place the lamb loin with the long side towards you on your work surface and season with salt and pepper. Drain the sundried tomatoes, but retain the oil in which they were marinated. Pack the tomatoes in a long row lengthways over the lamb loin and scatter the feta cheese on top of the tomatoes. Scatter the mint or rosemary on top and roll up the meat from the long side to resemble a Swiss roll. Tie up in a few places with butcher's twine and place in an oven dish. Combine the oil from the sundried tomatoes with the olive oil and baste the meat with this. Cover with foil and roast for about 90 minutes. Remove the foil after 75 minutes and continue roasting uncovered. Remove the meat from the dish, place on a wooden chopping board, cover with foil and allow to rest for at least 10 minutes before slicing.

For the sauce

Make a gravy from the leftover stock in the oven dish: bring the stock to the boil in a pan and reduce it a bit. If there is not enough liquid, add the water. Add the white wine and bring it back to the boil. Make a roux by mixing the oil and flour together, then add this to the stock and stir through to thicken.

Enough for 6–8 people

Drunken lamb shanks

The dark, almost sinister colour of the beer gives the lamb shanks a lovely warm and intense flavour. This is another dish you can relinquish to the mercy of the oven. Served with samp, it is a meal fit for a king!



For the samp

1 kg samp, rinsed well

water

10 ml salt

125 g butter

For the lamb shanks

6 whole lamb shanks

6 sprigs fresh rosemary

6 sprigs fresh mint

salt and pepper

100 ml olive oil

2–3 large red onions, peeled and finely chopped

2–3 cloves garlic, peeled and cut into small strips

30 ml balsamic vinegar

50 ml honey

2 oranges, washed, halved and pips removed

1 litre lamb stock

340 ml dark beer

200 ml raisins or sultanas

For the samp

Preheat the oven to 80 °C. Place the samp in a large oven casserole and pour in enough water to reach about 2 cm above the samp. Add the salt and butter, cover with a lid and cook in the oven overnight or in the oven drawer for at least 8 hours.

For the lamb shanks

Preheat the oven to 160 °C. Clean the shanks and pat dry with paper towel. Using a sharp knife, make a small slit near the bone of each shank and insert a sprig of rosemary and mint. Season the shanks with salt and pepper. Preheat the oil in a large ovenproof pot and fry the shanks until golden-brown. Mix the remaining ingredients together and then add to the shanks and stir through. Cover with a lid or foil. Cook the shanks in the oven for 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ –3 hours or until the meat falls off the bones. When the cooking time is over, remove the shanks very carefully from the pot and try to keep them whole. Yes, I know they don't reach your stomach whole, but it looks very impressive if you serve shanks whole. Pour all the pan juices and leftover bits of orange, garlic and onion into a smaller saucepan and blitz with a stick blender until smooth. Reduce

the sauce until nice and thick. Season with salt and pepper if necessary and serve with the shanks and samp.

Enough for 6 people

Five-a-day cottage pie

We keep hearing that we should eat at least five portions of fruit and vegetables every day. Well, let's have them all in one dish. The old-fashioned scent of cloves and coriander brings back memories of Grandma's kitchen!

For the meat filling

1 kg lamb mince

30 ml cake flour

salt and pepper

2.5 ml ground cloves

10 ml ground coriander

a sprig of fresh rosemary

30 ml olive oil

a stick of celery, finely chopped

1 large onion, peeled and finely chopped

1 large carrot, peeled and finely grated

2 cloves garlic, peeled and finely chopped

50 g tomato paste

15 ml Worcestershire sauce

250 ml lamb stock

For the topping

750 g potatoes, peeled and cubed

250 g butternut, peeled and cubed

200 ml milk

45 ml butter

2 egg yolks

freshly grated nutmeg

For the meat filling

Combine the mince with the flour, spices and herbs. Heat the olive oil in a large pan and stir-fry the meat until it starts

browning. Add the remaining ingredients, stir through and cook for about 15 minutes.

For the topping

Preheat the oven to 180 °C. Place the potato and butternut in a pot, cover with water, add the salt and bring to the boil. When soft, drain and mash the potato and butternut mixture and then press through a sieve for a lump-free result. Mix the mash with the milk, butter and egg yolks together until combined. Taste and add a little more salt if necessary.

Spoon the meat filling into an ovenproof dish and cover with most of the potato and butternut mash. Spoon the remaining potato and butternut mixture into a piping bag and, depending on how much of the mixture you have left, either pipe roses all over the top or only along the sides of the dish. This will give it a fluffy appearance. Bake for about 30 minutes or until the top is golden-brown. Serve with vegetables of your choice or a salad.

Enough for 6 people

Farm curry

We always make this curry at fêtes and camps, and even the curry purists come back for seconds. It's a sweet, hearty curry and, believe me, you can't go wrong with this choice!

For the curry

30 ml oil

1 large onion, peeled and finely chopped

2 cloves garlic, peeled and finely chopped

15 ml curry powder, mild or hot to taste

15 ml grated fresh ginger

10 ml turmeric

a stick of cinnamon

1 star anise

1 kg lamb shank or neck of lamb

salt and coarsely ground black pepper

1 litre lamb stock

50 g tomato paste

4–6 potatoes, peeled and cubed

For the sauce

20 ml cake flour

10–15 ml curry powder, mild or hot to taste

45 ml good-quality chutney

45 ml good-quality tomato sauce

45 ml vinegar

45 ml smooth apricot jam

For the curry

Heat the oil in a large, thick-bottomed cast-iron pot. Sauté the onion, garlic and spices. Add the meat, season with salt and pepper and fry until it starts to brown. Add the stock and tomato paste and cook covered until the meat is tender. This

usually takes about 1½ hours, or longer if you use mutton instead of lamb. You could also cover the pot with a lid and cook the meat in the oven for about 2 hours. Make sure there is enough liquid in the pot before adding the potatoes. This will prevent the food from burning. Add the potatoes when the meat is cooked but still firm. Continue cooking until the potatoes are done. Keep an eye on the liquid – add more stock or water if the curry is too dry.

For the sauce

Combine all the ingredients for the sauce and add to the meat just before the end of the cooking time. Keep an eye on the pot, as it can easily burn once the sauce has been added. Serve with rice and sambals.

Enough for 6 people

This dish can also be made on the fire as potjiekos.

Greek lamb koftas

Sometimes one can only dream about street cafés in faraway countries. These koftas make me imagine I'm barefoot and carefree on a Greek island. These elongated Greek meatballs make a wonderful Friday supper. This is also the only night in the week we allow ourselves to eat in front of the TV. The lovely hot koftas are delicious served in pita bread, with cool yoghurt and a salad – the family forgets all about the TV!



For the koftas

- 1 red onion, peeled and quartered**
- 2 cloves garlic, peeled**

10 ml finely chopped fresh parsley
10 ml finely chopped fresh coriander
10 ml finely chopped fresh mint
7.5 ml salt
10 ml coarsely ground black pepper
5 ml smoked paprika
5 ml ground cumin
grated rind of 1 lemon
800 g lamb mince
oil for frying
8 bamboo sticks (soaked in water) or metal skewers

For serving

250 ml Greek yoghurt
grated rind and juice of 1/2 lemon for serving
10 ml finely chopped fresh mint
fresh lettuce
tomato
8 pita breads

Place the onion, garlic, herbs, spices and lemon rind in a food processor and chop finely. Add the mince and pulse until everything is nicely combined. Heat a bit of oil over medium heat. Pinch off a bit of mince and fry, then check if extra seasoning is needed. Divide the remaining mince into 8 balls. Dampen your hands with water and shape the balls into elongated koftas. Skewer the koftas onto bamboo or metal sticks and braai over the coals or fry in a piping-hot griddle pan until cooked through. Add the lemon rind and juice and mint to the yoghurt and stir through. Serve the koftas with the flavoured yoghurt, lettuce and tomato in hot pitas.

Makes 8 koftas



Grilled sardines

These sardines remind me of the multiplication of the bread and fish in Biblical times. They are not for fastidious eaters, but they are finger-licking good food. There is no civilised way to tackle them!



12 small sardines, scraped and gutted

salt and pepper

12 rashers pancetta or bacon

Season the sardines with a little salt and pepper and fold a rasher of pancetta or bacon around each one. Spray a griddle pan with non-stick cooking spray and place over a low heat. You can also braai the sardines over coals, but make sure the

heat is very low otherwise they will burn. Grill the sardines on both sides until the fish is cooked and the pancetta or bacon is crispy. Serve with bread and a nice tomato salad.

Enough for 6 people

Tastiest green bean stew ever

There are some flavours I absolutely have to taste in a traditional dish: cloves, coriander and even cinnamon if it's called for. I add three of these flavours to this stew! The stew is made in the oven, which makes it perfect for lazy winter days when you trust the oven with your food while you relax in front of the fire with a book.

50 ml olive oil

1.5 kg neck of lamb – keep the neck(s) whole

salt and coarsely ground black pepper

whole cloves to taste

10 ml ground coriander

250 ml lamb stock

2 onions, peeled and finely chopped

2 cloves garlic, peeled and finely chopped

1 kg frozen green beans

4–5 large potatoes, peeled and cubed

juice of 1 lemon

Preheat the oven to 180 °C. Heat the oil in a cast-iron pot on the stovetop. Season the lamb neck(s) with the salt, pepper, cloves and coriander. Fry the lamb until browned on all sides. Add the stock, onions and garlic, cover the pot with a lid or foil and cook in the oven for about 1½ hours, then add the beans and potatoes. Add a little water if necessary. Return to the oven for 30–40 minutes or until the potatoes are soft. Transfer the pot to the stovetop. If there's too much liquid, heat to reduce, or add a little water if it's too dry. Remove one or two of the potatoes from the stew and, using a potato masher, mash until smooth and then return to the pot to thicken the stew. Season with lots of black pepper, salt and the lemon juice before serving on rice with a cucumber salad.

Enough for 6 people

Prawn sticks

These prawns make an ideal starter at a braai. Braai the prawns while everyone is chatting around the fire, and eat straight from the braai grid.



For the marinade

- 1 small onion, peeled and finely chopped**
- 1–2 cloves garlic, peeled and finely chopped**
- 60 ml sherry – preferably dry**
- 60 ml olive oil**

For the prawns

- 1 kg prawn tails, shells on**
- bamboo sticks soaked in water**

For the marinade

Combine all the ingredients for the marinade in a mixing bowl and add the prawns. Refrigerate and marinate for 2 hours.

For the prawns

If you are grilling the prawns in the oven, preheat the oven to 180 °C. Skewer a few prawns lengthways on each bamboo

stick. Repeat until all the prawns have been skewered and grill over the open fire or in the oven until the prawns are bright red and cooked through. Keep a bowl of lemony water and serviettes at hand for sticky fingers.

Enough for 6 people

Fish with a herbed crust

A bit of fresh fish is lovely, and this fish never disappoints. It's perfect for a quick meal, for instance when unexpected guests arrive for dinner!



**4 × 250 g fish fillets – use a nice firm fish like yellowtail
or fresh hake**

salt and pepper

250 ml fresh breadcrumbs

grated rind and juice of 1 lemon

125 ml chopped fresh parsley

1–2 cloves garlic, peeled and finely chopped

15 ml olive oil

Preheat the oven to 180 °C. Season the fish fillets with salt and pepper and place in an ovenproof dish or on a baking tray. Combine the breadcrumbs, lemon rind and juice, parsley, garlic and oil. The crumbs should be moist but not clump together. Divide the crumbs and sprinkle some on top of each fish fillet. Bake for 15–20 minutes until the crumbs are brown and the fish is cooked through.

Enough for 4 people

Replace the breadcrumbs with ground almonds for a gluten-free recipe.

Ask-for-more seafood potjie

If you like having people around you when you make a potjie, this is just the one for you. People cluster round the pot and can't wait to taste the deliciousness.

45 ml olive oil

2 large onions, peeled and finely chopped

2–3 cloves garlic, peeled and finely chopped

10 ml fennel seeds

25 ml smoked paprika

10 ml turmeric

5 ml ground ginger

5 ml ground cinnamon

3 bay leaves

15 ml dried origanum

3 × 410 g cans chopped tomatoes

1 × 70 g can tomato paste

1 litre chicken stock

500 ml white wine

30 ml sugar

salt

grated rind and juice of 2 lemons

400 g yellowtail

800 g hake

2 kg mussels

1 medium crab

2 kg prawns, cleaned

The potjie can easily be made on the stovetop, but I'll give you the directions for an open fire. Start the fire with a few briquettes and as soon as they are medium-hot, place the potjie on the fire. Heat the oil in the pot and fry the onions, garlic and all the spices. Stir continuously until the onions are browned and soft. Add the tomatoes, tomato paste, chicken

stock, wine and sugar and bring to the boil. Cover with a lid and simmer the sauce for 45–60 minutes. Keep checking the pot (the sauce will burn if it reduces too much). If necessary, add 250 ml water and reduce again. The more times you add water and reduce the sauce, the more intense the flavours will be. Taste the sauce and add salt and the lemon rind and juice to taste. Place the seafood in the pot and cover with the lid. Cook for 6–8 minutes until the fish is done and all the mussels have opened. The crab and prawns should be blood red and the crab's legs should come off easily when you pull them. Serve with heaps of fresh bread.

Enough for 12 people

Almost-as-good-as-steak tuna

I have fooled many people with this tuna, especially those who say they don't like fish. If you're lucky enough to get fresh tuna, do try this recipe.

1 kg fresh tuna, cut into 6 portions

50 ml olive oil

grated rind and juice of 1 lemon

5 ml chopped fresh origanum

30 ml balsamic vinegar

salt and a few grinds of black pepper

Make 6 cuts of 2.5–3 cm in each tuna steak. Mix the remaining ingredients and pour into a sealable plastic bag. Place the tuna steaks in the bag and refrigerate for a few hours. Heat a griddle pan until very hot, remove the tuna steaks from the plastic bag and grill until the fish starts changing colour almost to the middle when looked at from the side. Turn the fish and cook the other side. The ideal is to have a pink strip in the middle when you cut into the fish. Continuously brush the fish with the marinade from the plastic bag while cooking. Serve with green olive salsa (see recipe below).

Enough for 6 people

Green olive salsa

30 ml good-quality olive oil
1 clove garlic, peeled and finely chopped
1 large celery stick, leaves removed and finely chopped
200 ml pitted green olives, finely chopped
20 ml green capers, finely chopped
10 ml chopped fresh mint
a few grinds of freshly ground black pepper

Combine all the ingredients for the salsa in a bowl and set aside for about 10 minutes for the flavours to develop. Serve with the tuna steaks. This salsa is also delicious with a grilled beef steak.

Makes 350–400 ml

Good-for-the-heart fishcakes

I once read out this recipe on the radio, half embarrassed that I went on air with a can of pilchards, and on the way home a woman phoned me and, with tears in her voice, said: ‘Thank you, Nina. All I had in the house today was the one can of fish, and you taught me how to serve eight fishcakes with pride!’ That day I learned a life lesson I’ll never forget.



For the fishcakes

- 1 × 410 g can pink salmon or pilchards, deboned**
- 2 eggs**
- 125 ml chopped fresh parsley**

**125 ml dry oats
salt and pepper to taste
grated rind and juice of 1 lemon
1 small red chilli, chopped (optional)
olive oil for frying**

For the minty yoghurt sauce

**250 ml low-fat plain yoghurt
15 ml chopped fresh mint
grated rind of 1 lemon
salt and pepper to taste**

For the fishcakes

Combine all the ingredients, except the oil, in a mixing bowl and, using your hands, divide and then shape the mixture into 8 fishcakes. Heat the oil over medium heat and fry the fishcakes until golden-brown on both sides. Serve with a nice fresh salad and the minty yoghurt sauce.

For the minty yoghurt sauce

Combine all the ingredients and serve each fishcake topped with some minty yoghurt sauce.

Makes 8 fishcakes

Fire up the braai



There are few things as wonderful as the aromas that emanate from a real braai! Whether it's a sputtering lamb chop with a proper fatty edge, a sweet and sour pork rib or now and then even a flavourful chunk of beef, the effect is always the same ... mouths watering and cheeks bulging with yumminess!

To see ribs being perfectly braaied at Flintstone's castle in the middle of the Namibian Desert is as close to an art form as you can get, though I suppose any meal is fit for a king if served under the starry night sky. If you go to Njoli Square in Port Elizabeth or Mzoli's in Gugulethu, you can enjoy braaied

chicken as warm, tasty and colourful as the people of Africa.

Fortunately vegetarians no longer have to hide away when the braai fires are lit. Skewered tofu and halloumi cheese with crispy vegetables braaied to perfection is the order of the day, and even the most hardened carnivore may be tempted.



Sosatie chops

Traditional sosaties are truly South African and I still find the flavour and colour of a lamb sosatie irresistible. This recipe doesn't require hours of marinating, and by using chops instead of a leg of lamb, you get to keep the leg of lamb for Sunday's roast!



For the marinade

80 ml cooking oil

2 large onions, peeled and finely chopped

2–3 cloves garlic, peeled and finely chopped

45 ml curry powder, mild or hot to taste

5 ml turmeric
5 ml ground ginger
5 ml ground dried coriander
2.5 ml ground cloves
100 ml sugar
100 ml vinegar
80 ml smooth apricot jam or 50 ml golden syrup
salt and pepper to taste

For the sosaties

8 lamb loin chops
8 sosatie sticks or metal skewers
16 dried Turkish apricots
2 large onion, peeled and quartered

For the marinade

Heat the oil in a pan and fry the onions and garlic until soft. Add the remaining ingredients and cook for about 5 minutes. Allow to cool completely. Season the chops with salt and pepper. Pour the cooled marinade into an airtight container large enough to hold all the chops and place the chops in the marinade. Refrigerate for about 15 minutes.

For the sosaties

Skewer one chop onto each sosatie stick, with a piece of onion and a dried apricot on either side. Braai over the coals until cooked to your liking. Drizzle each sosatie with marinade while braaiing. Serve with a banana and yoghurt salad.

Makes 8 sosaties

Rosemary and bacon potatoes

Believe me, you'll never be able to make enough of these potatoes. They absolutely fly out of the dish, and if one or two are left over, you'll be sure to see someone slip into the kitchen late at night for another bite!



16 rashers bacon

16 baby potatoes, washed and parboiled

16 sprigs rosemary

olive oil for drizzling

Wrap a rasher of bacon around each potato. Where the two

ends of the bacon rasher meet, thread a sprig of rosemary through both ends to secure the bacon. Drizzle with olive oil and braai over luke-warm coals until the bacon is crispy and brown and the potato is slightly caramelised.

Enough for 6–8 people

Spicy potato and sausage dish

You can make this delicious dish as you stand around the braai fire. It can be served as a snack before the braai, but it also makes a great late breakfast.

30 ml olive oil

1 kg good-quality boerewors (sausage)

a few bamboo sticks or metal skewers

1 onion, peeled and finely chopped

2 cloves garlic, peeled and finely chopped

10 ml smoked paprika

5 ml chilli flakes

salt and pepper to taste

4 large potatoes, washed and cut into cubes

125 ml beef stock

juice of 1 lemon

30 ml chopped fresh parsley

Place a cast-iron pan over the coals and heat the oil in the pan. Twist the sausage into a spiral and fry it in the pan, turning once to brown both sides. Thread bamboo sticks or metal skewers through the wors spiral, set aside and keep warm. Fry the onion, garlic and spices in the same pan until transparent and then add the potato cubes. Fry until the potato starts browning and then add the beef stock. Cook the potatoes until soft and until all the liquid has cooked away. Remove all the coals from underneath the pan and place the wors spiral on top of the potatoes. Cover and leave to cook slowly using the residual heat, allowing the spices and juices of the sausage to drip onto the potatoes. Serve with a good squirt of lemon juice and the chopped parsley.

Enough for 4 people

You can also cook 500 ml of coarsely chopped cabbage

with the potatoes. Just don't cook it until it's too soft – the idea is for the cabbage to still be crunchy.

Marinated flat leg of lamb on the coals

This recipe can hardly be called a recipe. The butcher can debone the leg of lamb, and with just five ingredients even the most inexperienced cook can serve up something tasty for his or her family. If you serve it in pita breads, you can easily feed 8 people!



2 bottles salad dressing – use the Greek variation with a vinegar base

a few sprigs of fresh rosemary

1.5 kg leg of lamb – ask your butcher to debone it

salt and pepper (optional)

Pour the two bottles of salad dressing into a large glass or stainless-steel dish and add a sprig of rosemary. Place the leg of lamb in the dish and marinate in the fridge for a day or two, turning the meat every few hours. Light a fire and when your fire is ready, season the leg of lamb with salt, pepper and rosemary, place it on a folding braai grid (or use tongs to turn it) and brown it quickly on both sides. Remove some of the coals to reduce the heat. Continue braaiing the meat (and add more coals if necessary) until it is done to your liking. Serve in warm pita breads with fresh lettuce, tomatoes and tzatziki or hummus.

Enough for 8 people



Vegetable sosaties

These sosaties are supposed to be for vegetarians, but carnivores will enjoy them just as much. By all means make a lot of them, because the leftovers can be added to a salad or served with couscous.



- 12 courgettes, topped, tailed and sliced into 2 cm-thick rings**
- 12 pickling onions**
- 1 large red onion, peeled and quartered**
- 2 peppers of each colour, deseeded and cut into chunks**
- 12 cherry tomatoes**

12 baby potatoes, cooked but not too soft

1 bottle French salad dressing

**12 sosatie sticks – soaked in water to prevent them from
burning**

Place all the vegetables in a glass bowl and pour over the salad dressing. Refrigerate and marinate for 1 hour. Skewer the vegetables onto the sticks and braai over the coals while drizzling with the leftover marinade. Serve with a green salad and thick slices of whole-wheat bread.

Makes 12 sosaties

Herbed garlic bread

This is the most delicious garlic bread and I can never make enough of it. It's definitely a favourite among both young and old.

**1 very long or 2 medium French loaves
herb butter (see recipe on p. 164)**

Preheat the oven to 150 °C. Slice the bread halfway through into 1½ cm-thick slices and spread the herb butter lavishly between each slice. Wrap the bread in foil and bake in the oven for 30 minutes. Serve the bread while it is still very hot.

Enough for 6 people

A pot braai is so companionable

The idea for a pot braai occurred to me one evening when I looked outside and saw the men chatting around the fire while the women were scurrying around in the kitchen. If you have a pot braai, each guest can cook his or her piece of meat to perfection, and you can have everyone's favourite cut of meat, fish or even chicken ready for them. My favourite meat for a pot braai is a lovely rump steak or beef fillet. You'll have no anxiety about whose meat needs to be rare, well done or medium – everyone does his or her own thing.



**4 × 300 g steaks of your choice
45 ml good-quality olive oil**

**30 ml balsamic vinegar or lemon juice
salt and pepper to taste**

Place all the ingredients into a sealable plastic bag, refrigerate and marinate the steaks for at least 1 hour. Remove the steaks from the fridge and set aside until they have reached room temperature. Give each guest his or her piece of meat to braai to their liking. Serve with a potato bake and salad.

Enough for 4 people

Buy clay plant pots, with their trays, from your nearest nursery, plus a piece of chicken mesh and a bag of briquettes, and you're ready for a braai. Using tin snips, cut circles of chicken mesh just a bit wider than the top of your pots. Place a piece of firelighter in the bottom of each pot and light it. Then add 4 briquettes and let them burn until they are white-hot. Now place the circle of chicken mesh on top and braai your meat just the way you like it.



Greek lamb burgers with quick tzatziki

Meat is expensive and to use chops, steak and other expensive cuts for every braai can be hard on your wallet. What to do when the craving for a braai overtakes you before payday? Make burgers! Your braai craving will be satisfied and the contents of your wallet will still be completely safe.



For the lamb patties

1 kg lamb or beef mince

125 ml chopped spring onions – use both the white and the green parts

1 egg

10 ml salt
10 ml coarsely ground black pepper
10 ml finely chopped fresh origanum
10 ml finely chopped fresh mint
grated rind and juice of 1 lemon
6 *bocconcini* (mozzarella balls) or 6 blocks (1.5 × 1.5 × 1.5 cm) mozzarella cheese

For the tzatziki

500 ml Greek yoghurt
1/2 small English cucumber, with skin retained but seeds removed
grated rind and juice of 1 lemon
10 ml chopped fresh mint
2 cloves garlic, peeled and finely chopped
5 ml salt
5 ml coarsely ground black pepper

To serve

fresh lettuce
2 ripe red tomatoes, thinly sliced
6 bread rolls

For the lamb patties

Place the mince, spring onions, egg, spices, herbs and the lemon rind and juice in a bowl and mix well. Divide the mixture into 6 portions. Place a *bocconcini* or a block of cheese in the centre of each portion and carefully shape the patty around the cheese – make sure there are no gaps where the lovely cheese can run out. Braai the burgers over medium coals until cooked.

For the tzatziki

Make the tzatziki while the burgers are braaiing. Pour the yoghurt into a glass bowl. Grate the cucumber and press out all

the liquid with your hands. Add the cucumber and all the remaining ingredients to the yoghurt, mix until combined and refrigerate until ready to serve.

To serve

Place the lettuce, tomato and patties into the bread rolls and serve with the lovely cool tzatziki.

Makes 6 burgers

A visit to the soup kitchen



For many people today a soup kitchen is their only hope of a daily meal. Soup is just the thing to fill hungry tummies because it is such a powerful source of nourishment.

During the cold winter months in Ceres, where I grew up, Fridays were always bread-and-soup days. On Thursdays my grandma would already start making ‘soetsuurdeeg’, a homemade yeast dough, and by Friday afternoon there would be several enormous pot-bellied farm loaves on her wooden table ... one for each of her children and their families.

In our own kitchen, Fridays in winter were bean-soup days.

Even as a child, the prospect of Mom's delicious soup and Grandma's farm bread was an exciting one. We used to go to Grandma's house on our bicycles after school to fetch the bread. The loaves were carefully wrapped in clean dishcloths for the journey back home on the bike's carrier. Sometimes the temptation to cut off a crust and slather it with butter and lovely sour apricot jam was almost too much – supper was such a long way off.

Today soup can be as simple or as elegant as the occasion where it's being served, and we can travel around the world with many different kinds of soup. Robust, blood-red Russian *borscht* is served nowadays in the most elegant little glasses as a starter at fancy receptions, and the once velvety *vichyssoise* dons its farm apparel and becomes a tasty, thick country soup. So all the soup rules have been thrown out of the window and, these days, we make soup to our taste, with all the wonderful fresh ingredients at our disposal.

After all these years, my heart is still filled with gratitude when I can wrap my hands around a simple bowl of vegetable soup!



Cold potato, parsnip and leek soup

The classic French vichyssoise dons its farm apparel – it is refreshing on a hot summer's day, but still delivers that warm hug we expect from soup. Instead of processing the soup until completely smooth, leave some of the potato, parsnip and leek unprocessed for that lovely farm feeling.



50 ml butter

15 ml olive oil

8 leeks – use only the white parts

1 clove garlic, peeled and finely chopped

2 large potatoes, peeled and cubed

3 large parsnips, 2 grated and 1 kept for garnishing
500 ml good-quality chicken stock
500 ml fresh cream
salt and white pepper
fresh grated nutmeg
oil for frying the parsnip
chives for garnishing

For the soup

Melt the butter and oil together in a large pot. Sauté the leeks and garlic until soft but not browned. Add the potatoes, grated parsnip and chicken stock and boil for 30–35 minutes or until the potatoes are soft but not mushy. Pour three-quarters of the soup into the food processor (pour the remaining soup into a separate bowl) and pulse until smooth. Pour the puréed soup back into the pot and stir in the cream. Season with salt and pepper if necessary, as well as fresh nutmeg. Simmer for about 3 minutes and then add the reserved unpuréed soup. Remove the soup from the heat, set aside to cool to room temperature and then cool further over a bowl of ice. Never put hot soup in the fridge. Only refrigerate the soup once it has reached room temperature.

For the garnishing

Using a vegetable peeler, slice the remaining parsnip into long strips. Heat enough oil to deep-fry the parsnip. When the oil is very hot, use a slotted spoon to carefully deep-fry the parsnips until crispy and brown. Drain on paper towel. Ladle the cold soup into mugs or soup bowls and garnish with some fried parsnips and chives.

Enough for 6 medium helpings or 8–10 small helpings

Instead of deep-fried parsnip, the following garnishes can be used:

- crispy fried pancetta or bacon

- **herbed croutons** – cut bread into cubes, drizzle with olive oil, sprinkle with herbs and salt and bake in the oven until crispy
- a bit of poached salmon and sour cream
- crumbled Blue cheese
- marinated and sliced shiitake mushrooms

Tomato soup with potato dumplings (gnocchi)

This is the most delicious tomato soup, and the gnocchi or dumplings give you that lovely satisfied feeling when you've eaten a bowlful. The soup is no trouble to make and is done quickly, but the dumplings take some time – however, they are definitely worth the effort. I suspect you could also make the dumplings with butternut or sweet potato for a whole new experience, but let's start with the easiest ones.



For the gnocchi (potato dumplings)

800 g floury potatoes

200 g cake flour

5 ml salt

1 egg

For the tomato soup

30 ml olive oil

1 small onion, peeled and finely chopped

1 clove garlic, peeled and finely chopped

2 × 410 g cans chopped tomatoes

1 × 80 g can tomato paste

100 ml white wine

15 ml sugar

grated rind and juice of 1 lemon

salt and pepper to taste

a large handful of fresh basil

500 ml vegetable stock

freshly grated Parmesan cheese

For the gnocchi

Preheat the oven to 180 °C and bake the potatoes for 1 hour or until soft when pricked with a fork. Remove the potatoes from the oven, halve them and scoop out the flesh into a bowl. Press the potato through a sieve or mash with a potato masher – make sure there are no lumps. Allow to cool slightly. Add three-quarters of the flour, as well as the salt, and mix. Add the egg and then use your judgement to decide whether you need more flour. Be careful not to handle the dough too much, because you want your dumplings to be feather light! Pinch off chunks of dough and roll into 30 cm-long thin sausages. Cut each sausage into bite-sized pieces and roll each piece over the back of a fork to form ridges. This is important, because the soup will stick to these ridges. Set aside.

For the tomato soup

Heat the oil in a pot and add the onion and garlic. Sauté until

soft and slightly browned. Add the remaining ingredients (except the Parmesan) and cook for about 30 minutes. If you want a very smooth soup, pour it into a food processor and pulse. Otherwise you can keep it nice and thick and full of texture. Now place the gnocchi in the tomato soup and cook slowly until they rise to the surface of the soup (this is how you know when gnocchi are cooked). Ladle the soup into pretty soup bowls and serve with freshly grated Parmesan cheese.

Enough for 4 people

Poor man's vegetable soup

This vegetable soup is probably the cheapest but most flavourful soup you'll ever make. My husband is no soup lover, but even he asks for seconds! I make the soup in my pressure cooker, but it works in the slow cooker, an ordinary pot, or any pot as long as it's big enough!

1 kg beef soup bones

6 litres beef stock

500 g packet dried split peas, rinsed under cold water

4 large potatoes, peeled, grated and placed into cold water

4 large carrots, peeled, grated and placed into cold water

2 large leeks, finely chopped

a handful of fresh parsley, finely chopped (optional)

1 × 410 g can chopped tomatoes (optional)

salt and coarsely ground black pepper

lemon juice or white vinegar (optional)

Place the soup bones and beef stock in a large pot and boil until the marrow has cooked out of the bones. Remove the bones from the pot and add the split peas. Boil for about 30 minutes or until the peas are soft. Drain the water from the grated potatoes and carrots. Add the potatoes, carrots and leeks to the soup. Boil for another 30 minutes until the soup thickens (keep your eye on the soup as it can burn quite easily). Add the parsley and tomatoes if using. Season with salt and lots of pepper, and add a squirt of lemon juice or white vinegar, if desired, for that extra tang. Now all you need is Grandma's bread!

Enough for 8–10 people

Fiery Thai soup with seafood

I only encountered Thai cooking rather late in life, but as the saying goes: ‘It was love at first sight.’ I love the almost aphrodisiac feeling of the ‘wow-this-is-hot!’ curry, the freshness of the ingredients and the thought of travelling to faraway countries, with their exotic flavours, with every bite I eat! This is a very sociable dish. Place a large wok with soup and seafood in the centre of the table and you will spark off much conversation. Scent warm cloth serviettes with lemongrass for that extra-special touch.

30 ml oil

3 × 15 cm stalks lemongrass, finely chopped – hard outer parts discarded

1 onion, peeled and sliced into long strips

45 ml fish sauce

100 g fresh coriander

18 prawns, shells removed and reserved

500 ml water

1.25 litres good-quality chicken stock

1 × 400 ml can coconut cream

1 red chilli, deseeded (optional) and cut into strips

1 green chilli, deseeded (optional) and cut into strips

250 g mushrooms – use several different kinds such as shiitake, portobello, portobellini and enoki

15 ml sugar

30–45 ml red curry paste

18 black mussels

500 g calamari rings

45 ml lime juice – fresh is always better

fresh coriander for garnishing

lime quarters for garnishing

Heat half of the oil in a pot or wok and add the lemongrass, onion, 15 ml of the fish sauce and half of the coriander. Stir-fry until the onion and lemongrass are soft but not mushy. Add the

prawn shells, water, stock and coconut cream and cook for 20 minutes until the soup thickens slightly. Now pour the soup into a separate bowl through a sieve and discard the shells and roughage. Set aside and keep warm. Rinse the pot or wok and heat the remaining oil in it. Stir-fry the chillies and mushrooms until soft but not mushy. Add the sugar, curry paste, soup, prawns, mussels and calamari rings and cook for about 10 minutes, until the prawns are cooked and the mussels have opened up. By this time the calamari will also be cooked. Season to taste with the remaining fish sauce and the lime juice. Serve garnished with fresh coriander and lime quarters.

Enough for 4 people

Grilled apple and onion soup

I entered this soup in a competition, and when I asked my dad to taste it, his comment was: ‘Strange, but delicious!’ This makes a great appetiser – something about the sweet-salty combination just works. ‘You try to stop, but you simply can’t’ has been the feedback I’ve received. Needless to say, I didn’t win the competition, but according to my family this soup is a winner!



For the caramelised apple slices

100 ml sugar

100 ml boiling water

1 large apple

For the soup

15 ml butter

15 ml olive oil

2 large onions, peeled, cored and chopped

4 Golden Delicious apples, peeled and cubed

3 sprigs fresh thyme

30 ml brown sugar

salt and pepper to taste

250 ml chicken or vegetable stock

250 ml cream

125 ml milk (if needed)

15–20 ml cornflour or cake flour (if needed)

125 ml grated mature Cheddar cheese

80 g Blue cheese, crumbled

For the caramelised apple slices

Preheat the oven to 150 °C and spray a baking tray with non-stick cooking spray. Melt the sugar in the boiling water in a saucepan. Meanwhile, using a mandoline or a sharp knife, slice the apple as thinly as you can (almost transparent). When the sugar is melted, dip each apple slice into the syrup. Arrange the apple slices on the baking tray and bake for 15 minutes or until golden-brown.

For the soup

Preheat the oven to 180 °C. Melt the butter and oil in an overproof pot. Add the onions, apples and thyme and place the pot in the oven to roast. When the onions and apples are a lovely golden-brown, remove the sprigs of thyme. Place the onions and apples in a food processor and pulse until smooth. Add the brown sugar, and season with salt and pepper. Pour the purée back into the pot and add the stock and stir through. Cook for about 5 minutes on the stovetop, then add the cream. If the soup is too thick, add a little milk. If it is too thin, mix the cornflour or flour with 40 ml water to form a paste and then stir it into the soup. Taste the soup and adjust the

seasoning if necessary. Add the cheeses and stir until melted.
Serve garnished with the caramelised apple slices and extra
crumbled Blue cheese.

Enough for 4 people

A walk through the vegetable garden and orchard



There are few things as satisfying as standing in the garden and eating something from a tree or plant that you planted yourself and watched as it grew.

In our backyard in Ceres there were several fruit trees, but the one that made my toes curl with delight was the peach tree

that bore so lavishly that we could give away baskets and baskets of peaches. I used to stand under that same tree and eat peaches until the sweet juice ran down my chin – delicious, sweet stone-free peaches, with skin you can pull off in one go when the fruit is ripe.

We would walk through Uncle Frikkie's huge vegetable garden with a glass salt cellar, eating jam tomatoes until our cheeks bulged. We would pick cucumbers, cut off the tips and rub them against the cucumber's ends to 'rub out the bitterness', then eat one cucumber after another until we could eat no more.

I dream of a vegetable garden as big as my Uncle Frikkie's, but I'm content with the herbs, peas and tomatoes I get from my own potted garden. I can hardly imagine a cooking session in my kitchen without lovely fresh fruit and vegetables.

I usually welcome winter in my kitchen with an upside-down apple tart made with sun-kissed Golden Delicious apples, and in summer we become quite exuberant with strawberry sorbet and fresh, crisp salads from my wheelbarrow garden!



Asparagus and goat's-milk cheese quiche

Gone are the days when a savoury tart would be cobbled together with Vienna sausages and boiled eggs. A new generation of tarts has arrived – they are fresh, light and look like art on a plate. This quiche is ideal for a light lunch with your girlfriends or even a romantic meal with your husband under a tree in the garden. With the wonderful flavour of the goat's-milk cheese, he won't even miss the meat, and to top it off the filling doesn't get baked, giving you more time to bat your eyelashes at him!



For the crust

500 ml ground almonds

45 ml butter

1 egg

2.5 ml salt

2.5 ml mustard powder

4 × 12-cm shallow ceramic pie dishes

For the filling

500 g fresh asparagus – or use 250 g asparagus and 250 g frozen baby or fresh peas

250 g goat's-milk cheese

250 ml Greek yoghurt

5 ml coarsely ground black pepper

30 ml chopped fresh basil

30 ml chopped fresh mint

15 ml chopped fresh parsley

15 ml olive oil for grilling

salt and pepper for grilling

For the crust

Place all the ingredients for the crust in a food processor and mix well. Divide the pastry into 4 portions and press each portion over the base and sides of a pie dish. Prick each base with a fork and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes. Preheat the oven to 180 °C. Bake the crusts for 8–10 minutes or until light brown. Remove from the oven and allow to cool.

For the filling

Blanch half of the asparagus until soft, then immediately plunge into cold water to prevent them losing their colour. If using peas, let them stand in boiling hot water for 5–10 minutes before adding them to the asparagus. Cut the asparagus into smaller pieces, place them and most of the peas (if using reserve some for garnishing) in a mixing bowl with the remaining ingredients (except the olive oil and seasoning) and mix. Spoon the filling into the baked crusts and refrigerate. Drizzle the remaining asparagus with olive oil, season with salt

and pepper and grill in a griddle pan or in the oven until the asparagus are cooked and have black grill marks all over. Serve the quiches topped with the grilled asparagus, the remaining peas and fine herbs such as young parsley, basil or rocket from the garden.

Makes 4 × 12-cm quiches

Green bean salad

Except for tomatoes, I know of no other vegetable more generous at harvest time than green beans. A few beanstalks will give you hours of cooking pleasure, and modern small bean varieties have made beans quite attractive. Beans can stand up straight on a trendy vegetable platter, or they can lie down, wrapped up with cream cheese in a prosciutto blanket, for a snack. I remember my Mom was very strict about always making bean stew with lazy-housewife beans (stringless beans). It was quite a search when the craving for bean stew with neck of lamb caught up with you ...

My favourite way of eating beans is so simple you could hardly call it a recipe. This salad can be served hot or cold. Where I grew up there was no such thing as Parmesan cheese. It was the Italians who came up with a plan to make 'poor man's Parmesan cheese' by devising the flavoured breadcrumbs used in this salad.



5 ml salt

750 g small or young green beans, washed and stalks removed

200 ml fresh breadcrumbs

1 clove garlic, peeled and finely chopped

45 ml chopped fresh parsley

45 ml lemon-infused olive oil

grated rind and juice of 1 lemon

salt and pepper to taste

1 red chilli, deseeded (optional) and finely chopped

100 g blanched almonds, lightly toasted

Place a pot of water on the stove and bring to the boil. Add the salt and green beans and blanch for about 4 minutes. Have a bowl of iced water ready and, when the beans are cooked, plunge them into the water immediately to stop the cooking process; this also allows them to retain their lovely green colour. Drain the beans and arrange them on an attractive salad platter. Place the remaining ingredients, except the almonds, in a food processor and process until the mixture resembles fine breadcrumbs. Toast these breadcrumbs in a pan over low heat until they are light brown in colour. Sprinkle the crumbs over the beans and scatter the almonds on top.

Enough for 4–6 people

You can replace the breadcrumbs (poor man's Parmesan cheese) with real Parmesan cheese, in which case you would use only the Parmesan cheese, the almonds and a generous dash of olive oil.

Mouthwatering sweet potatoes

The French call it ‘gratin’ when a dish is covered with crispy brown cheesy goodness, but I like to call it ‘mouthwatering’, because we all know that feeling when your mouth starts watering at the thought of some dish or other. This sweet-potato dish always sparks off a conversation when I serve it. Nobody can believe it’s so simple, or that the humble sweet potato can be so tasty.



1 kg sweet potatoes, peeled and cubed

5 ml salt

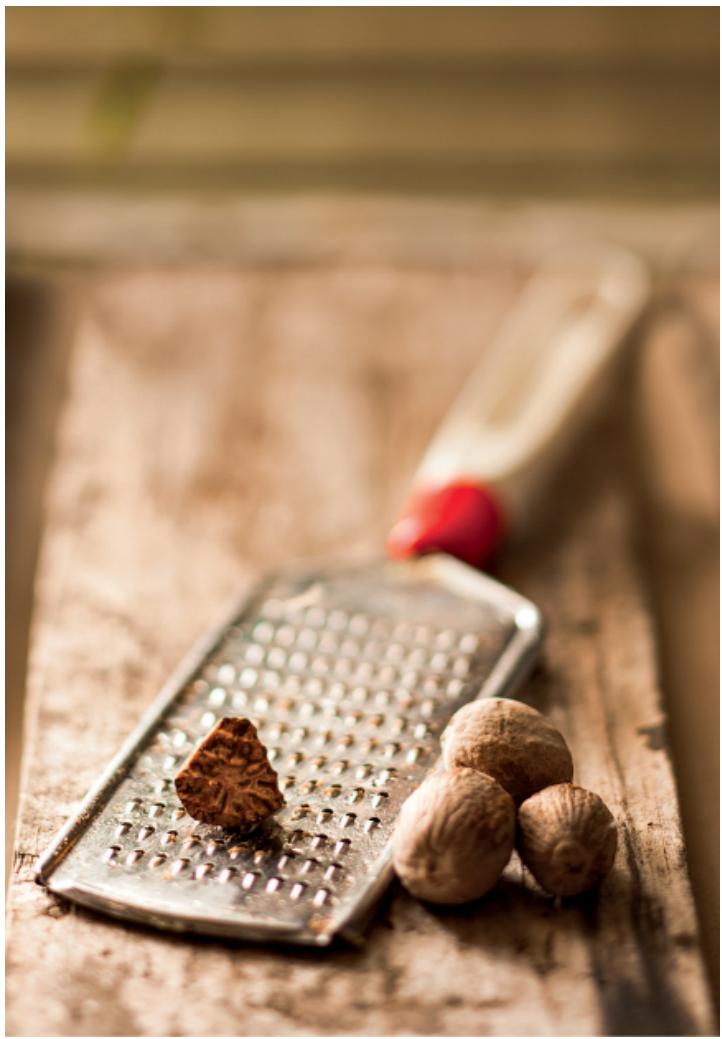
grated fresh nutmeg

500 ml cream

250 ml grated mature Cheddar cheese

Preheat the oven to 180 °C. Place the sweet potatoes in a pot of water on the stove. Add the salt and bring to the boil. Reduce the heat and simmer until the sweet potatoes are cooked. Drain and transfer to an ovenproof dish. Grate a little fresh nutmeg over the sweet potatoes. Beat the cream until stiff, then fold in the cheese. Spoon the cream mixture over the sweet potatoes and bake for 35–40 minutes until the top is golden-brown. Grate some nutmeg over the top and serve at a braai or with your favourite Sunday roast.

Enough for 6 people



Fresh crushed-wheat salad

There are many versions of this salad, which every self-respecting housewife swears hers is the very best. I would never make that claim, because this salad was already on my Mom's table when I was just a child. This version of the salad remains a favourite, and whoever tastes it asks for the recipe. So I do indeed think it is very good! What makes this salad work for me is the fact that I always have the ingredients in my kitchen – it's just a matter of assembling them!

1 litre water

5 ml salt

500 g crushed wheat

2 large spring onions, white and green parts finely chopped

1 each red, green and yellow peppers, deseeded and diced

1 stick celery, leaves removed, cut into small pieces

125 ml raisins

250 ml sunflower oil

250 ml good-quality tomato sauce

10–15 ml curry powder, mild or hot to taste

30 ml brown sugar

30 ml vinegar

salt and pepper to taste

chopped fresh parsley or coriander for garnishing

Pour the water into a pot and add the salt. Add the crushed wheat and bring to the boil. Cook for 30–35 minutes until the wheat is soft but not mushy. Pour the contents of the pot through a sieve and rinse the wheat under tap water until the water runs clear. Place the wheat in a salad bowl. Combine the remaining ingredients, add to the wheat and stir through. Garnish with fresh parsley or coriander.

Enough for 8 people

- *This salad will keep in the fridge for just over a week and is ideal for those lazy days when nobody feels like cooking.*
- *Add crumbled feta or goat's-milk cheese for a proper vegetarian meal.*
- *Spoon the salad into small plastic containers and pack into your husband's or children's lunch boxes.*

Italian cauliflower salad

This salad is a proper mouthful, and with all the strong flavours and textures, not even the man in your life will complain about the absence of a plate of cooked food. Make an effort with the ingredients – you'll be rewarded with a melody of flavours and colours on your plate.

2 large red peppers, kept whole

1 large cauliflower, cut into small florets and core removed

80 ml olive oil

30 ml red wine vinegar or balsamic vinegar

250 g salami, sliced

125 ml pitted black olives

125 ml pitted green olives

45 ml capers

chopped fresh parsley

Preheat the oven to 240 °C. Arrange the red peppers on a baking tray and roast for 25–35 minutes or until the skin is black and blistered. Remove the peppers from the oven and place in a glass bowl. Cover with cling wrap so that the peppers can sweat – this will make it easy to peel them. Heat a pot of water over high heat, add the cauliflower and cook until just soft, then drain and leave to cool in a bowl. Add the olive oil and vinegar to the cauliflower and toss to flavour all the florets. Remove the peppers from the bowl and carefully peel them. It doesn't matter if a few burnt bits of peel remain – they provide flavour. Cut off the tops of the peppers and, using a tablespoon, carefully remove the insides. Cut the peppers into strips. Fold each salami slice in four to resemble a flower. Arrange the salami flowers, peppers and cauliflower florets on a salad platter. Scatter over the olives and capers and garnish with parsley. Serve with a freshly baked ciabatta.

Enough for 6 people



Roasted baby aubergines with tahini salad dressing

There is something magical and exotic about recipes from the Middle East, and whenever I eat something that comes from this region, I am always transported to faraway places with camels and sand dunes. This vegetarian salad is probably one of the easiest recipes to prepare and you'll have a hard time finding a dish with a better taste and texture! The sticky, oven-roasted aubergine is delicious enough on its own, but serve it with a creamy tahini salad dressing and pomegranate 'rubies' and you have a winner!



For the tahini salad dressing

80 ml fresh lemon juice
grated rind of 1 lemon
80 ml good-quality olive oil
80 ml tahini (available at health shops and the health-food section of selected shops)
15 ml honey
1–2 cloves garlic, peeled and finely chopped
salt and pepper to taste
water as required

For the baby aubergines

50 ml olive oil
5 ml coarse salt
15 ml dried origanum
5 ml coarsely ground black pepper
500 g small aubergines, halved lengthways, stalks retained
200 ml pomegranate seeds
30 ml chopped fresh coriander

For the tahini salad dressing

Place all the ingredients in a bowl and whisk until smooth and creamy. Store the dressing in a glass jar in the fridge. If the dressing becomes too thick, dilute it with a bit of water.

Makes about 300 ml salad dressing

For the baby aubergines

Preheat the oven to 220 °C. Pour the olive oil onto a baking tray and scatter the salt, origanum and black pepper over the oil. Place the aubergine halves on the baking tray, roast for 10–15 minutes, turning them over and roasting until they are golden-brown and soft. Arrange the aubergines on a salad platter, drizzle over the tahini salad dressing and scatter the pomegranate seeds and fresh coriander on top.

Enough for 6 people

Honey-sweet peaches with vanilla crème fraîche

To me it's a bit of a sin to daub a fruit that has been made so perfectly with all kinds of sauces and syrups, but now and then Mother Nature could do with a helping hand to make a dessert a little sweeter and more seductive. Desserts can sometimes become so complicated, but if you use first-class ingredients, half the battle is won.



100 ml honey

50 g butter

1 vanilla pod, cut open and seeds scraped out and reserved

**4 ripe peaches, halved, stoned and skinned – preferably
use fleshy stone-free peaches**

30 ml brandy

250 g crème fraîche

15 ml castor sugar

Heat a pan on the stove and melt the honey and butter. Add the vanilla pod and simmer for a few minutes to infuse. Place the peach halves in the syrup with the cut side down. Reduce the heat; the peaches should caramelise slowly in the syrup (this takes about about 5 minutes). Carefully pour the brandy over the peaches and flambé. Meanwhile, combine the crème fraîche with the castor sugar and the reserved vanilla seeds. When the peaches have caramelised, spoon two peach halves onto each plate and serve with the vanilla crème fraîche.

Enough for 4 people



Let's hit the road



During our winter school holidays we always headed north. The planning and packing adventure was almost as good as the holiday on the farm. The *padkos* (roadside snacks) basket was, of course, an important part of the planning. Dad always had to find a box that would fit exactly between the two front seats of the old snub-nosed Mercedes. Dad's other important task was to collect dry vine stumps and put them in a burlap bag. The bag was then carefully tied to the axle of the Venter trailer for the braai at the side of the road!

Mom's job was to get hold of lamb necks, not too big, not too

small – the butcher knew exactly what she needed. The night before the great exodus, the lamb necks were thoroughly roasted in the oven with salt, pepper and coriander until the meat almost fell off the bone, then neatly wrapped in foil and put straight into the *padkos* basket, together with a sharp knife and a damp cloth for each member of the family. The other treasures in Mom's food basket were moist tomato sandwiches, hard-boiled eggs and, naturally, tasty sausage for the braai!

The next day we would hit the road, the planned timing of the trip had us arriving at Three Sisters, just before Beaufort West, at daybreak. What great excitement it was for us children to see who could spot the Three Sisters mountains first! Well, as soon as one of us shouted 'I see them! I see them!', Dad would immediately pull over to the side of the road, and the vine stumps would be lit right there to braai the lamb necks and sausage. After a lovely cup of sweet black coffee, we would be ready to take to the road again for the long journey ahead!



Oven-roasted lamb necks

Undoubtedly the highlight of our padkos basket. If the mutton or lamb necks are a bit too big, you have to share, but the ideal is to buy small necks so that everyone can sit on his or her own anthill and enjoy this bit of meat.



30 ml dried coriander seeds

4 small mutton or lamb necks, cleaned, excess fat and skin removed

30 ml olive oil

20 ml salt

20 ml pepper

15 ml Worcestershire sauce

Preheat the oven to 180 °C. Toast the coriander seeds in a dry pan over a low heat until you can smell the coriander. This usually takes 2–3 minutes. Crush the seeds using a pestle and mortar, a food processor or even a coffee grinder. Drizzle the lamb necks with the olive oil and then rub it in so that the necks are completely covered. Season with the salt, pepper and coriander, and then drizzle with the Worcestershire sauce. Place the necks in an oven casserole, cover and roast for about 1 hour. Reduce the heat to 120 °C and roast for another hour. Increase the heat to 180 °C again and remove the lid. Roast for 20–30 minutes until the necks are nicely browned. Remove from the oven and allow to cool before wrapping in foil. Remember to pack a good sharp knife and a damp cloth scented with rosemary!

Enough for 4 people



My virtuous meatballs

A food basket without meatballs can hardly be called a food basket, and some gourmets will judge a woman's virtue and calculate her worth in rubies by the quality of her meatballs. The idea is that meatballs should remain soft but not disintegrate. My foolproof plan for meatballs is to flatten them slightly like burger patties and then fry them in a pan, making them crispy on the outside but juicy on the inside.

3 slices of white bread, soaked in cold water or dipped in a little milk, liquid pressed out

500 g lean beef mince

250 g pork mince

7.5 ml salt

2.5 ml ground cloves

10 ml ground coriander

5 ml coarsely ground black pepper

100 ml chopped fresh parsley

1 onion, peeled and coarsely grated

grated rind and juice of 1 lemon

oil for frying

Place all the ingredients, except the oil, in a mixing bowl and mix well, but do not over-mix. Dampen your hands and shape the mixture into small, flat meatballs. Heat oil in a pan and fry the meatballs until golden-brown and cooked. Drain on paper towel, allow the meatballs to cool and pack them in foil.

Enough for 6 people

- *When you make meatballs, first fry a bit of the meat mixture so that you can taste and decide if the seasoning needs to be adjusted. Adjust the seasoning and then make your meatballs.*
- *You can replace the parsley with mint and serve the*

meatballs in mini pita breads with salad and Greek yoghurt.

Jiffy ‘vetkoek’

Many people prefer the porous, chewy kind of ‘vetkoek’ you make with yeast. I do too, but if you’re planning a holiday and a long, exciting journey, you can take short cuts in the kitchen. These feather light ‘vetkoek’ are ready in a jiffy and delicious with a cup of steaming hot coffee.

500 ml self-raising flour

10 ml baking powder

5 ml salt

250 ml milk or water

oil for frying

Combine all the ingredients, except the oil, in a mixing bowl. Heat about 1 cm-deep oil in a pan and fry tablespoonfuls of the dough until cooked, crispy and brown on both sides. Serve with golden syrup and cheese.

Enough for 4–6 people

- Add 250 ml fresh or canned corn kernels to the dough to transform the ‘vetkoek’ into delicious corn fritters.
- Add 125 ml grated biltong to the dough for a savoury snack.
- Add 125 ml freshly grated Parmesan cheese to the dough and serve as a snack with good-quality tomato sauce.
- Fill the ‘vetkoek’ with curried mince.
- Press a Rolo chocolate into the middle of the dough before frying to transform the ‘vetkoek’ into a sweet treat for the children. Sprinkle icing sugar over the cooked ‘vetkoek’.



Wors and potato sosaties

It is important to use the very best boerewors for these sosaties. To me, boerewors should have a coarse texture and undertones of cloves and coriander. If you braai the wors and potatoes together, the potatoes absorb the wors juices and flavours as they cook – delicious.



- 1 kg good-quality thin boerewors (sausage)**
- 4 bamboo sticks, soaked in water**
- 8–12 baby potatoes, boiled until just tender**
- 8 fresh bay leaves or sprigs of fresh rosemary**
- 15 ml olive oil**

10 ml Worcestershire sauce

Cut the boerewors into 4 pieces. Now skewer each sausage in an S-shape onto a bamboo stick, interspersed with potatoes and bay leaves or sprigs of rosemary. Pack into a foil container until you are ready for your roadside braai. Combine the oil and Worcestershire sauce. Pour the mixture into a small airtight plastic container to use as a marinade while you braai. If you don't want to make these sosaties for *padkos*, you can fry them in a griddle pan, regularly brushing with the marinade, until done.

Makes 4 sosaties

- *For extra goodness, skewer mushrooms with the sausage and potatoes.*
- *For a vegetarian option, use cubes of halloumi or feta cheese instead of sausage.*
- *You can also chop the sausage into smaller pieces and skewer these onto the bamboo sticks.*

Cream cheese and pineapple roll

We South Africans love our meat and heavy padkos, but eating only rich food can make you sleepy, and if you're driving, fatigue is not an option! Do pack some lighter alternatives in your basket – these lovely fresh rolls are ideal.



250 g cream cheese

5 ml curry powder, mild or hot to taste

5–10 ml sugar or honey

15 ml chopped chives

grated rind and juice of 1 lime

4 fresh whole-wheat rolls

a few fresh frilly lettuce leaves

1 fresh pineapple, peeled, cored and thinly sliced

Combine the cream cheese, curry powder, sugar or honey, chives and the lime rind and juice in a mixing bowl. Slice open the rolls, spread the cream-cheese filling over each half and then place the lettuce leaves on the bottom halves. Place the fresh pineapple slices on top. Cover with the top half of the roll and pack for the basket.

Makes 4 rolls

- *Replace the whole-wheat rolls with bagels.*
- *Add a few drops of Tabasco sauce for an extra kick.*



Fruit salad with granadilla syrup

I always remember my Mom peeling apples while we were on the road – huge big Starking or Golden Delicious apples. She used Dad's black rib-handled knife and peeled one apple at a time. Then she would hand thin apple slices to us in the back of the car – a few slices were just enough – until she started on the next apple. I, however, don't have Mom's patience, and all the apple peels in the car don't work for me, so this fruit-salad is my version – I hope Mom will forgive my laziness! The syrup should be made a few days in advance to ensure that it can be properly chilled.



For the granadilla syrup

500 ml water
250 ml sugar
1 vanilla pod, sliced open
pulp of 5 granadillas or 1 × 300 g can granadilla pulp
a pinch of salt

For the fruit salad

1 pineapple, peeled, cored and cubed
2 large Golden Delicious apples, peeled, cored and cubed
2 large peaches, peeled and cubed
250 g berries – use strawberries, raspberries, gooseberries and blackberries
2 oranges, peeled and cut into segments with a sharp knife
juice of 1 lemon

For the granadilla syrup

Pour the water into a pot and add the sugar and the vanilla pod. Heat slowly to melt the sugar. When the sugar is melted, bring to the boil and boil for 4–5 minutes to thicken the syrup slightly. Add the granadilla pulp and the salt and boil for a further 2 minutes. Remove the vanilla pod and pour the syrup into a sterilised glass bottle. Allow the syrup to cool to room temperature before refrigerating.

Makes about 750 ml syrup

For the fruit salad

Combine all the fruit in a large bowl. Squeeze the lemon juice over the fruit and toss to cover all the fruit in lemon juice. Spoon the fruit salad into small plastic containers. Pour a bit of the granadilla syrup over the fruit and seal with plastic lids. Keep the containers of fruit salad in the cooler bag until you feel like eating something refreshing.

Enough for 6 people

- *The quantity of granadilla syrup is much more than required, but it can also be used for cocktails, so keep some handy in the fridge.*
- *In winter, fresh berries and soft fruit are scarce – instead, use canned fruit that has been preserved in natural juice.*
- *Remember to pack plastic or bamboo spoons.*

Sweets for my sweet! Sugar for my honey!



A sweet snack, something sweet, pudding, dessert – call it what you will, no meal would be complete without it. I can hardly imagine concluding a family meal without a proper pudding ... buttermilk pudding, malva pudding, Jan Ellis pudding (malva pudding's little brother) or a lovely tart lemon pudding.

During the hot summer months we can delight in home-made ice cream and sorbet, and nowadays there are no rules. Gorgonzola is no longer shackled to the cheese board, but can

play cat and mouse with your taste buds in a delicious, rich ice cream! Basil is the perfect dance partner for strawberries in a bright red sorbet.

Sometimes the sweetness at the end of the meal can be as simple as breaking open a ripe fig and enjoying it with a bit of goat's-milk cheese – entirely unpretentious yet so delicious!



Meringues with guava custard

Custard, no matter how it is served, remains a stalwart of the dessert table. Whether you like thick custard with canned peaches or thin custard over a Jan Ellis pudding, it remains an indispensable part of a pudding ... in my house, anyway. This posh dessert is very French, but I give it a different flavour with guavas, a fruit sometimes overlooked in food circles. In summer my Mom makes the most marvellous guava pudding, which we call 'gallon pudding', because the recipe makes such a lot. This dessert is my up-market version of 'gallon pudding'.



For the praline

125 ml castor sugar

100 ml hazelnuts, roasted and skins removed (rub the nuts between your hands – the skin will come off quite easily)

For the custard

500 ml milk

1 vanilla pod, sliced open

1 × 410 g can guavas, pitted and drained

5 egg yolks

125 ml castor sugar

For the meringues

3 egg whites

125 ml castor sugar

700 ml milk

For the praline

Melt the sugar in a heavy-based pot over low heat until completely melted. Chop the nuts and sprinkle them onto a greased baking tray. Pour the caramelised sugar over the nuts and allow to cool and harden. When you're ready to use the praline, chop it in a food processor or place it in a plastic bag and break it using a rolling pin.

For the custard

Heat the milk, the vanilla pod and the guavas in a pot until it almost starts to boil. Pour the milk through a sieve into a bowl, discard the vanilla pod, place the guavas in a blender and pulse until smooth. Add the guava purée to the flavoured milk and stir through. Meanwhile, beat the egg yolks and castor sugar until pale yellow. Pour the flavoured milk into the egg mixture and mix well. Pour this mixture back into the pot and cook over very low heat until the custard thickens. Allow the custard to cool.

For the meringues

Beat the egg whites in a clean mixing bowl until they form soft, white peaks. Continue beating and add the sugar a tablespoonful at a time. Beat until the meringue is thick and glossy. Heat the milk to boiling point in a pot, then reduce the heat and allow the milk to simmer. Using two spoons, shape the meringue into 4 large portions or 8 smaller ones. Slide the meringue portions from the spoon into the hot milk and poach for 2–3 minutes in total, turning once during this time. Spoon the custard into 4 pretty bowls, carefully remove the meringues from the milk and place on top of the custard. Sprinkle over the praline just before serving.

Enough for 4 people

Pan bread pudding

Bread pudding has always fascinated me. The fact that you can cobble together a feather-light pudding from stale bread, milk, eggs and sugar is nothing short of a miracle to me. Of course, the pudding can become very fancy if you replace the milk with cream, and the sugar with vanilla-castor sugar, but the basic principles remain the same. The French put the proverbial cherry on top with their 'pain perdu', which is just a different incarnation of bread pudding. I like individual portions, so I prefer to make my bread pudding in a pan. I give this recipe a true South African flavour by using 'mosbolletjie' (must-bun) bread.



4 eggs

500 ml cream

5 ml ground cinnamon

2.5 ml freshly grated nutmeg

125 ml castor sugar

1 vanilla pod, sliced open and seeds scraped out

8 slices day-old ‘mosbolletjie’ bread

125 g butter

cinnamon sugar or syrup for serving

fresh berries for serving

Beat the eggs, cream, cinnamon, nutmeg, sugar and vanilla seeds together in a bowl. Arrange the slices of bread in a flat, rectangular, ovenproof dish and pour the egg mixture over the bread. Set aside for at least 30 minutes until the bread has absorbed all the liquid. Preheat the oven to 180 °C. Melt the butter in a pan over medium heat. Remove the slices of bread from the egg mixture and shake off the excess. Fry each slice of bread until golden-brown on both sides. Keep the fried bread hot in the oven while you fry the remaining slices. Serve on plates or in individual pans (if you have a few) with a sprinkling of cinnamon sugar or syrup and garnished with fresh berries.

Enough for 8 people

- *If you have trouble finding ‘mosbolletjie’ bread, you can use day-old raisin bread.*
- *Instead of fresh berries, preserved figs or ginger can be served with the bread pudding.*

Emergency chocolate and pear dessert

We all have those days in our kitchens and in our lives when we need to take a short cut to get through to the other side. The ideal is to prepare your meals with care, taking your time, but sometimes there's no other way than just to look in the food cupboard for inspiration. This dessert is as old as the hills, and was originally made with peaches. I prefer pears, because they are softer and there's no need to struggle with peaches that try to escape from the dish when you cut them.



1 × 410 g can pears, drained

6 Romany Cream Original Chocolate biscuits

60 ml port or sherry

2 egg whites

100 ml castor sugar

Preheat the oven to 180 °C. Place the pears in an ovenproof dish with the hollows facing up. I always cut a very thin slice off the bottom of the pears to create a level base so that they don't slide around in the dish. Place a Romany Cream into each hollow and pour a little port or sherry over each biscuit. Bake in the oven for about 10 minutes or until the biscuits are soft. Meanwhile, beat the egg whites until soft peaks form, then beat in the castor sugar a tablespoonful at a time. Remove the pears from the oven and drop a dollop of meringue on top of each biscuit. Return to the oven and bake for 5 minutes or until the meringue is golden. Serve with a scoop of vanilla ice cream.

Enough for 6 people

- *The pears can be replaced with canned peaches.*
- *You can fold 125 ml desiccated coconut into the meringue after it has been beaten.*
- *The dessert can be made ahead of time up to the meringue stage. Make the meringue as soon as your guests are ready for dessert and bake until the meringue is golden – baking time is literally just 5 minutes.*

Old faithful brown pudding

A friend of ours is always teasing me and saying that pots and bowls come in four sizes ... small, medium, large and Timm-sized! Yes, I do have very big bowls in my house, but that's only because I grew up in an environment of 'always make room for one more at the table'. I suspect this recipe is as old as the hills, but I only got to know about it last year when a friend at church gave it to me. This certainly is an obliging recipe: you can double it, reduce it, colour it and flavour it to your heart's content and it will always come out tops!



Here are the quantities of the ingredients for medium-sized, large and Timm-sized puddings:

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MATERIALS (6 portions)		
	825 ml butter	
	925 ml sugar	
	3 eggs	
	45 ml apricot jam	
	250 ml cake flour	
	75 ml salt	
	15 ml ground ginger	
	15 ml ground cinnamon	
	25 ml bicarbonate of soda	
	250 ml boiling water	
	For the sauce	
	1 250 ml boiling water	
	825 ml sugar	

Preheat the oven to 180 °C. Cream the butter and sugar until light, then add the eggs and apricot jam. Mix in all the dry ingredients, except the bicarbonate of soda. Lastly, mix the bicarbonate of soda with the boiling water and add it to the rest of the ingredients.

Spray an oven dish with non-stick cooking spray. Combine the boiling water and sugar for the syrup and pour into the dish. Spoon the pudding batter over the syrup, cover the dish with foil and bake for 1-1½ hours or until a skewer inserted comes out clean. Serve with ice cream, cream or custard.

- Replace half the water with orange juice.
- Add the grated rind of 1 lemon to the batter.
- Add 250 ml desiccated coconut to the batter.
- Add 125 ml each of chopped nuts and dates to the batter.

Easy berry cheesecake

This cheesecake is also one of those recipes that every woman should have. I think most of us already have a version of the recipe on a piece of paper or serviette, but you might recognise it as a fridge tart with a biscuit base. Today I will turn the fridge tart on its head! This is another case of knowing the basic recipe and being able to put your own stamp on it just by being a little innovative!



125 ml boiling water

1 × 80 g packet jelly powder – choose the flavour to suit your fruit

3 × 250 g tubs plain cream cheese

250 ml fresh cream

fresh berries of your choice

8 ginger biscuits

Spray 8 cups or ramekins with non-stick cooking spray. Mix the boiling water with the jelly powder until the jelly has dissolved. Allow to cool but not to set. Beat the cream cheese in a mixing bowl until creamy and soft. Add the cooled jelly and mix well. Beat the cream until stiff and fold into the cream cheese and jelly mixture. Fill the cups or ramekins with the mixture and leave in the fridge for at least 2 hours to set. When you are ready to serve the cheesecake, quickly dip the cup or ramekin into boiling water and place a plate upside-down on top of the ramekin. Invert the plate so that the cheesecake falls out of the ramekin and onto the plate. Crumble a ginger biscuit over each cheesecake and serve with fresh berries.

Enough for 8 people

- *When you want to make a large cheesecake, make a biscuit base with a whole packet of crumbled ginger biscuits and 80 g melted butter. Press the biscuit mixture over the base of a 23-cm springform cake pan and pour the cheesecake mixture into it. Place in the fridge for at least 2 hours to set.*
- *Remember that fresh pineapple, kiwifruit and pawpaw prevent gelatine from setting; if you want to use these fruits you should use the canned variety.*
- *For a quick semifreddo you can place the ramekins in the freezer for 20–30 minutes. You will still have the creamy cheesecake texture, but at the same time it will have a similar texture to that of ice cream. It is wonderfully refreshing.*

Making ice cream is child's play

I dream of owning a large industrial ice-cream maker so that I can make ice cream in a jiffy when the craving overcomes, but yes, we all have our dreams and I'll have to wait for my ship to arrive.

Meanwhile, what do I do when the craving hits me? I think the first home-made ice cream I ever ate was made by our choir conductor's wife. She used to entertain the whole choir once a year, and she would take these old-fashioned enamel buckets of home-made ice cream out of the freezer. Her recipe used evaporated milk – I have a weakness for evaporated milk served with canned peaches and I immediately succumbed to her recipe. Here are a few recipes for ice cream that you can make without having to use an ice-cream maker.



Aunty Rina's old-fashioned vanilla ice cream

**1 × 380 g can evaporated milk, chilled overnight in the
fridge**

1 vanilla pod, sliced open and seeds scraped out

1 × 385 g can condensed milk

250 ml milk

a pinch of salt

Pour the chilled evaporated milk into your mixer, add the vanilla pod and seeds and beat until thick and creamy. Add the remaining ingredients and mix well. Pour into a plastic container and freeze. After 30 minutes, use a fork to scrape through and loosen the ice crystals. Repeat the process twice more, at 30-minute intervals, then freeze until hard.

Makes 1 litre ice cream

Blueberry yoghurt ice cream

125 ml castor sugar

30 ml water

250 g fresh blueberries

500 ml Greek yoghurt

Place the sugar, water and blueberries in a heavy-based pot and heat slowly to melt the sugar. When the sugar has melted, cook the blueberries for 2 minutes and remove from the stove. Allow to cool completely. Combine the cooled blueberries with the yoghurt, spoon into a plastic container and place in the freezer. After 30 minutes, use a fork to scrape through and loosen the ice crystals. Repeat the process twice more, at 30-minute intervals, then freeze until hard.

Makes 800 ml ice cream

Serve with more fresh berries and crumbled meringue.

Caramel ice cream for the grown-ups

600 ml fresh cream

1 × 380 g can Nestlé Caramel Treat

40 ml Amarula or Cape Velvet liqueur

125 ml crumbled caramel fudge

Beat the cream until stiffish but still soft and flowing. Mix in the Caramel Treat a tablespoonful at a time. Add the Amarula or Cape Velvet liqueur and the crumbled fudge and mix well. Spoon the mixture into a plastic container and leave in the freezer overnight.

Makes 1 litre ice cream

The alcohol in the liqueur will prevent the ice cream from becoming rock hard.

Dark chocolate and coffee ice cream



4 × 100 g slab 70 % dark chocolate, finely chopped

1 litre carton vanilla custard

15 ml good-quality instant coffee powder

15 ml boiling water

Melt the chocolate in the custard in a heavy-based saucepan over very low heat until the mixture is dark and smooth. Mix the coffee powder with the boiling water and add to the custard mixture. Pour the custard into a plastic container and place in the freezer. After 30 minutes, beat it with a fork to break up the ice crystals. Repeat the process twice more, at 30-

minute intervals, then freeze until hard.

Makes about 1. 2 litre ice cream

- *125 ml chocolate chips can be added for extra texture.*
- *125 ml frozen berries can be added instead of the coffee.*
- *Serve the ice cream in tiny glasses after a very rich meal.*



Today is market day!



Old and young volunteers standing and making feather-light pancakes and then sprinkling them liberally with cinnamon sugar – this is to a church bazaar what red sand is to the desert. It takes bravery and courage to walk past all that deliciousness! All would be well if you could stop at one pancake, but your conscience usually only starts bothering you after about the fourth one!

Church bazaars have made way for modern markets and these days this is where young and old hang out and get together. When I walk through these markets, I am often

amazed at how creative the people of our nation are. Just when you think there is no more room for new ideas, somebody comes up with something original and refreshing.

Nowadays we are all looking for something to supplement our wallets ... nothing is stopping you from perfecting your favourite braai sauce, salad dressing or brownies and selling them at the market. Who knows, you may be sitting on the proverbial golden egg and your offering may well be the next best seller!



Herb butter

This butter is so versatile – it's delicious with fish, chicken, your favourite cut of beef or just as a snack on toasted ciabatta. People are always asking me for the recipe, so if I had to run a stall at the next market, I would definitely sell this butter.

250 g salted butter, at room temperature

200 g goat's-milk cheese

15 ml pink peppercorns (available at most supermarkets or delis)

10 ml coarsely ground black pepper

15 ml green peppercorns

100 ml chopped fresh soft herbs – I prefer mint, thyme, oregano and parsley

Place all the ingredients in a food processor and pulse until smooth. I prefer to divide the butter and make two rolls of herb butter. However, you can also put it into a plastic container or glass jars. To make the butter rolls, spoon the butter in two thick and long ‘sausages’ onto two sheets of cling wrap and roll up tightly. Chill until required. The butter also freezes very well.

Makes 500 g herb butter – you can easily double the recipe and leftovers will keep in the freezer for up to 4 weeks

- Replace the black and green peppercorns with 10 ml smoked paprika.
- If using the butter for fish, add chopped dill to your herbs, as well as the grated rind and juice of 1 lemon.
- The butter can also be inserted under the skin of a Sunday roast chicken for the most delicious crispy chicken.
- Add 4 cloves peeled and chopped garlic to the

ingredients to make garlic butter.



Beetroot and pineapple chutney

I love beetroot, and Mom's green bean bredie with lovely sweet and sour red beetroot salad is still a hit when she comes for a visit.

Whole boiled beetroot with just a little salt, pepper and a few drops of olive oil is simplicity at its tastiest. This chutney is ideal to keep in jars and to serve with a cheese platter, corned beef, a braai and yes, even Mom's green bean bredie. The pineapple gives a lovely sour taste to the chutney.

3 large raw beetroots, peeled and grated

250 ml canned crushed pineapple – you can also use grated fresh pineapple

100 ml currants

100 ml sugar

45 ml red wine vinegar

2.5 ml salt

1–2 red chillies, kept whole

1 star anise

3 whole cloves

2 whole allspice

Place all the ingredients into a large heavy-based saucepan and heat slowly to melt the sugar. Bring to the boil and then cook the chutney for about 1 hour over very low heat until thick and a bit syrupy. Spoon into sterilised jars and keep in the fridge.

*Makes about 500 ml chutney – will keep for about a month
in an airtight container*



Herbed salad dressing

As students we were very poor and had to walk wherever we wanted to go. It was only around my fourth year at university that Dad managed to organise a vehicle for us. I think there are kids in primary school nowadays who get more pocket money in a week than we used to get in a month! With the small amount of pocket money we did get, we made some clever plans! We soon realised that home-made was better than bought, and that your money would last much longer. A well-known restaurant in town used to serve the most delicious salad dressing with their salad and toasted sandwiches, but we could only afford to go there at the beginning of the month. The responsibility fell to me to try to imitate the dressing. I think I got very close to the original taste, and I still make this dressing today. It's fantastic with salad, fish, chicken or drizzled over a baked potato.

500 ml Greek yoghurt

250 ml tangy mayonnaise

2 large handfuls fresh herbs such as mint, parsley, basil and origanum

2 cloves garlic, peeled and finely chopped

grated rind and juice of 1 lemon

1 red chilli, deseeded (optional)

Place all the ingredients into a food processor and pulse until smooth. Spoon into glass jars. When serving as a salad dressing, dilute with a bit of milk but serve undiluted on baked potatoes, fish and chicken.

Makes 1 litre salad dressing – will keep for about a month refrigerated in an airtight container



Pancakes with fillings

The ladies in aprons who stand and make pancakes on Saturdays at market days until their cheeks are flushed from the heat are, to me, the stars of the market. Their dedication and passion are unbelievable. This recipe is another one of those found on a piece of paper in Mom's recipe book. No notion of where it came from, just the word 'DELICIOUS' written at the bottom of the recipe in capital letters. These pancakes are indeed delicious. Although the recipe requires a lot of oil, you don't use any oil while frying.

4 extra-large eggs

1.25 litres water

50 ml white vinegar

250 ml cooking oil

4 × 250 ml cake flour

2.5 ml salt

20 ml baking powder

5 ml bicarbonate of soda

Beat the eggs, 250 ml of the water, the vinegar and oil until combined. Combine the flour, salt, baking powder and bicarbonate of soda in a mixing bowl. Add the flour mixture to the egg mixture and mix, while continually adding the remaining water, until you have a smooth batter. I use my mixer, leaving my hands free to add flour and water alternately. Allow the batter to stand for 30 minutes and then start frying the pancakes. Heat the pan until very hot and spread with a little oil just for the first pancake. Fry until golden-brown on both sides.

Makes 30–35 pancakes

- *I use my pancake pans only for pancakes. It might be an old wives' superstition, but my pancakes never stick.*
- *Keep the pancakes hot by arranging them on a plate*

and covering the plate with a cloth or a lid. If pancakes are kept hot by placing them on top of hot water, they can become very chewy.

- *For a very special occasion you can add the juice of 1 beetroot to your batter and show off with red velvet pancakes.*
- *For chocolate pancakes, add 100 ml good-quality cocoa to the flour mixture before combining it with the egg mixture.*

Decadent breakfast pancakes

250 g bacon rashers

40 g butter

500 g mushrooms, cleaned and finely chopped

salt and coarsely ground black pepper

a squirt of lemon juice

6 pancakes (see recipe on p. 167)

200 g Camembert or Brie cheese, cut into strips

fresh watercress or other herbs of your choice

Preheat the oven grill. Pack the bacon rashers in a single layer on a baking tray and grill until crispy and brown. Meanwhile, melt the butter in a pan and fry the mushrooms until golden-brown, but be careful that they don't become watery. Season the mushrooms with the salt, black pepper and a squirt of lemon juice. Set aside. Preheat the oven to 180 °C. Place a pancake on a plate and spoon some of the mushrooms down the middle, and top with 1–2 bacon rashers followed by some of the strips of cheese. Roll up the pancake and bake for about 1 minute or until the cheese is melted. Garnish with fresh herbs of your choice. To take this breakfast to new heights, serve it with a soft poached egg on top.

Enough for 6 pancakes

Smoked trout and cream cheese

1 × 250 g tub plain cream cheese

15 ml chopped fresh dill

coarsely ground black pepper to taste

a pinch of salt (optional)

6 pancakes (see recipe on p. 167)

250 g smoked trout or salmon

80 g fresh rocket leaves

Beat the cream cheese with a fork until soft. Add the dill, pepper and salt (if required) and mix well. Spread the cream-cheese mixture onto the pancakes. Divide the trout or salmon between the pancakes and place on top of the cream cheese. Scatter rocket leaves over the fish and roll up the pancakes. Serve as a light starter.

Enough for 6 pancakes

- *For this filling, the pancake should preferably be at room temperature.*
- *Replace the cream cheese with goat's-milk cheese for something different.*
- *Replace the smoked trout or salmon with smoked chicken.*

Toffee-apple filling



80 g butter

30 ml sugar

4 apples, peeled, cored and cut into thin slices

50 ml brandy

6 pancakes (see recipe on p. 167)

250 ml fresh cream, beaten

Melt the butter and sugar in a pan over high heat. When the butter and sugar has melted, fry the apple slices until golden-brown on both sides. Add the brandy and flambé until all the alcohol has cooked off. Serve the apple slices in the pancakes, with large tablespoonfuls of beaten fresh cream.

Enough for 6 pancakes

Cherry and chocolate marbled pound cake

A pound cake is nothing other than equal amounts of flour, butter and sugar. It's probably one of the easiest cakes to bake and again it is a basic recipe with so many possibilities. Cherries drenched in liqueur and chocolate are enough to make me swoon – and these are what transform this pound cake into something very special.

300 g self-raising flour

5 ml baking powder

2.5 ml salt

300 g butter, at room temperature

300 g castor sugar

3 eggs

50 ml milk

5 ml vanilla extract

1 × 100 g slab 70 % dark chocolate

100 g maraschino cherries, 50 g with stalks and 50 g without

Preheat the oven to 180 °C. Spray two 25-cm bread pan with non-stick cooking spray. Place the flour, baking powder and salt into a mixing bowl. Rub the butter into the flour mixture with your fingertips until it resembles fine breadcrumbs. Add the sugar and stir through. Beat the eggs, milk and vanilla extract together, add to the flour mixture and stir until combined. Melt the chocolate in a glass bowl placed over a pot of boiling water until smooth. Lightly stir (do not over-mix) the melted chocolate into the cake mixture to create a marbled effect. Add the cherries without stalks, then spoon the batter into the bread pans. Arrange the cherries with the stalks on top and lightly press into the mixture. Bake for 45 minutes or until a skewer inserted comes out clean. Turn the cakes out onto a wire rack to cool.

Makes 2 large loaves or 6 individual small loaves

- *Bake small individual loaves by spooning the cake mixture into small bread pans or tin cans, then bake for 30–35 minutes.*

Popcorn balls

There is a child in each of us and when it comes to sweets, I'm at the front of the queue. To me, bazaars and market days are like Christmas – you always find something new, something you would never make yourself or sometimes just a more interesting version of an old recipe you've been using for years. I make a lot of Rice Krispie slices for my children, and even though they are now teenagers, they are still mad about them. Another of their favourite snacks is caramel popcorn. In this recipe I combine the two treats.



- 100 g butter**
- 2 × 400 g packets marshmallows**
- 2 × 150 g caramel toffees**
- 10 cups popcorn, already popped**

Melt the butter, marshmallows and caramel toffees in a large saucepan over very low heat. When the mixture is smooth and all the caramel toffees have melted, add the popcorn and stir through quickly. If there is too much of the marshmallow mixture, add a little more popcorn. Now you have to work very quickly otherwise the mixture will set. Ask someone to help you roll 12 balls. Each ball can be moulded around one end of a sosatie stick or around a brightly coloured ribbon so that you can hang it up.

Makes 12 balls

- *If you like bright colours, you can add a few drops of food colouring of your choice to the marshmallow mixture before adding the popcorn.*
- *Add 250 ml nuts to the mixture for extra crunch!*

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gas mark	
100 cool	
120 cool	
150	
180 moderate	
200 moderate	
220 moderate hot	
240	
260	
280 hot	

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Material	
Milk	
2/4tsp	
3/4tsp	
5 tsp	
20spcl	
40spcl	
Tablespoons	
1 1/2tbsp	
20tbsp	
35tbsp	
Cups	
60 cmlp	
80 cmlp	
1/25cmlp	
1/60cmlp	
200cmlp	
250cmlp	

375 mps	
300 psl	
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Easy Cooking from Nina's Kitchen is a cookbook about homely and unpretentious food. As the title so aptly states, Nina makes cooking easy by using affordable, locally available ingredients, and recipes to inspire you to cook with love!

With over 100 recipes there is something to suit all tastes, from snacks and delicious meals for book club meetings, new twists on ordinary braai recipes, a chapter covering chicken, beef, lamb, pork and seafood, to soups and vegetarian meals, sweet treats and ideas for market days!

The recipes are easy to follow and complemented by beautiful food and lifestyle photography. *Easy Cooking from Nina's Kitchen* is a cookbook that will ensure your family and friends return for more.

Apart from being a food stylist, photographer and chef, **Nina Timm** is a mother who understands that moms who work a full day want easy, affordable and delicious recipes. For just over three years Nina has entertained listeners with her stories and recipes during her weekly radio show on SABC's RSG. Nina's food blog, www.my-easy-cooking.com is one of South Africa's most read. She is also a recipe development consultant for various companies.

